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# THE THEATER DESIGNS OF C. HOWARD CRANE

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## Introduction

The architectural practice of C. Howard Crane thrived in the city of Detroit for over twenty years. From the start of his career at a very young age his commissions consisted of banks, office buildings, apartment houses and large residences. However, the true success of Crane's firm came early as a result of his impressive ability to design elegant theaters of every scale. It was particularly his mastery of movie palace design that gave Crane prominence among such colleagues as Thomas W. Lamb and John Eberson. Interestingly, unlike Lamb and Eberson, Crane had no formal training in architecture. While the others designed for the legitimate stage before embarking upon motion picture theater design, Crane followed his instincts and immediately began to design buildings for motion pictures, based on his faith that this new art form would have widespread success.

As the motion picture industry evolved, and the functional demands placed upon the theaters that would house its product increased, Crane's designs changed accordingly. Crane once stated:

> In general terms, there should be no specialists in the practice of architecture, since the theory of planning and designing is always the same; but achieving success with experience in designing and erecting buildings for a particular purpose will create special aptitude and ability in that particular field, which may be called merely "acquiring technique," to render better service for that particular work.

By the time of the Depression, Crane's firm had designed over 300 theaters in the United States, Canada and England and over 50 theaters in the city of Detroit alone. Meanwhile, today the wrecking ball swings and cities allow for the endless deterioration of the few remaining examples of this grand

architecture gone by, a style that once graced small towns and large cities alike. Therefore, this thesis has been written with the hope of stimulating an increased awareness of the movie palace era and the work of C. Howard Crane, one of the masterminds within this design movement.

In completion of this thesis I want to thank David De Long and Craig Morrison for their devoted guidance and helpful advice. In addition, special thanks to William Benedict and the rest of the gang at the Theatre Historical Society for their continuous cooperation and informative contributions, always at one's beck and call. Thanks also to Hillsman Wright of the Los Angeles Historical Theatre Foundation, Louis Wiltse, former associate with C. Howard Crane and Associates, and Kitty Gushee, granddaughter of C. Howard Crane, all for their invaluable help. Personal thanks must go to John and my parents for their constant and loving support. Also, I want to acknowledge my appreciation to the board and staff of the Michigan Opera Theatre for their faithful efforts toward the restoration of the former Capitol Theatre, one of Crane's most beautifully designed theaters in the city of Detroit.

## Chapter One

### Setting the Stage: An Early History of the Movie Industry

To understand how the movie palace became such an integral part of the film industry in the 1920's, knowledge of the industry's fast and turbulent growth in the early years is necessary. While there is a world-wide debate as to who actually invented cinema, the American belief that Thomas Edison was the true inventor has the most evidence of being accurate.[1] On April 23, 1896 Edison first publicly exhibited a projection of moving pictures on a screen with his machine called the Vitascope, at Koster & Bials' Music Hall near New York's Herald Square.[2] By 1903, store owners in many big cities and some small towns were converting their stores into places with movie shows, and hence developed the "Nickelodeon." The name "Nickelodeon" was conceived by John P. Harris of McKeesport, Pennsylvania who simply combined his admission price of five cents with the Greek word for theater.[3] By 1910 districts of small, family owned businesses that replaced their simple storefronts with highly decorative and elaborately illuminated facades as a way of attracting audiences to the new moving picture shows were widespread.[4] However, many operations closed after only a few years because the owners realized they needed bigger theaters to accommodate the growing crowds of curious viewers. It was noticed by film exhibitors that the larger vaudeville houses were a perfect venue for the movie shows, which at this

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[1] Nick Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930's* (London: British Film Institute, 1983), 9.

[2] Ben Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: the Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: Clarkston N. Potter, Inc., 1961), 13.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

time were simply short, black and white images of silent melodramas and comedies. At first the films were second billing in these theaters, following the popular stage acts.[5] But, "as motion pictures grew in both audience appeal and technical quality, they eventually took over the top spot in the act as well as the old vaudeville halls." [6]

Most of the men who would become the moguls of the large movie studios, such as William Fox, Adolph Zukor, and Sam Warner who opened a ninety-six seat store show in New Castle, Pennsylvania, started out in the business as theater owners.[7] The emergence of the movie studio system came about as the theater owners attempted to escape the restrictions of Thomas Edison's Motion Picture Patents Company, which gave him monopolistic control over the use of his machine and the American film industry. Those who wanted "to ensure for themselves profits greater than those potentially available to them as mere purveyors of somebody else's product...realized they would have to go into production as well." [8] After an anti-trust suit abolished the Motion Picture Patents Company, the movie industry was on its way. No longer would film-making be "secondary" to Edison's concentration on only the exhibition and distribution of his product.[9]

At this point, theater owners such as Sam Warner, Carl Laemmle, Adolph Zukor and William Fox had no more experience in the industry than Edison. However, through their knowledge of the exhibition business, they had the advantage of first hand experience with audiences and their reactions,

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[5] David Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1981),25.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 12.

[8] Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment*, 9.

[9] Ibid.

unlike Edison who "viewed the audience as anonymous consumers of his product."[10] The studio system began with a different perspective on how to make a profit, which was by controlling production, distribution and exhibition, and by aiming toward the needs of "an identifiable audience." [11] Eventually it would be realized that to gain and maintain this control, the studios would have to initiate a campaign to build and own chains of theaters nationwide.

In January, 1923, *The American Review of Reviews* published an article called "The Motion Picture Industry: 'Service' The Supreme Purpose." In the article's third segment, the "Magnitude of the Industry," the astounding development of the film exhibition industry was reported.

> Millions and millions of dollars are invested by theater owners in the theaters. There is an investment in real estate, equipment, and property of approximately $500,000,000... There are about 15,000 regularly operated motion picture houses in the United States... From the "Nickelodeon" of a decade ago, where motion pictures were shown in some old storeroom for a nickel admission price, to the three or four million dollar theater devoted exclusively to motion pictures, seating several thousand, with unexcelled orchestration and pipe-organ accompaniment, with stage and lighting effects unsurpassed, is an amazing record of progress. All these developments surrounding motion pictures have been so gradual and steady that we fail usually to appreciate the vast improvement of every phase of the industry. The motion-picture business has its production, sales, and retail branches just as in other industries, which are represented by the producer, distributor and exhibitor. [12]

By the time this article appeared, several lucky small theater exhibitors

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[10] Roddick, 10.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Will H. Hays, "The Motion Picture Industry: 'Service' The Supreme Purpose," *The American Review of Reviews*, January, 1923, 69-70.

had progressed to studio ownership, a position from which they now produced and distributed their own films. In the process though, they had lost the one branch of the industry with which they had started out having the most control. The exhibition of films and ownership of theaters continued to be in the control of separate corporations and independent, small chain exhibitors, which tended to be affiliated with or under contract to show the films of a particular studio. It was from these corporations that architects received their first commissions to design theaters with accommodations for film exhibition. Eventually the studio moguls became nervous that the corporate exhibitors, as they bought and built more theaters, would be able to overpower the studios. For instance by 1921, "the lack of a single Loew's theater in Chicago [was] evidence of the near-total domination of that city's theater exhibition by the team of A.J. Balaban and Sam Katz,".whose recently built 3,880 seat Chicago Theatre had met with instant success.[13] While Adolph Zukor had between 1912 and 1916 worked his way up from a small New York City exhibitor on Fourteenth Street, to the head of Paramount-Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, a $25,000,000 production and distribution company, he feared those who remained in the position that he once had.[14] As his biographer, Irwin Will, dramatically told the story, Zukor,

> ...had revolutionized production...[and] had placed distribution in its modern relation to the business as a whole. Now, he began to look ahead into the future of exhibition, and to worry. Moving-picture houses, springing up like mushrooms all over the United States, were showing a decided tendency to assemble into "strings." Next the strings were twisting together into strong ropes which might yet strangle the producers.

[13] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 47.

[14] Irwin Will, *The House that Shadows Built* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1928), 222.

> Corporations in New England, the Middle West, and California owned their ten, fifteen, even twenty-five new, well-equipped city theatres. The time might come when the more powerful groups would combine and hold producers at their mercy.[15]

It was this fear that by the mid twenties drove the movie studios to start on a purchasing, merging, and building rampage, forcing many small circuits out of business and becoming more lucrative and powerful in the process.[16] According to the November 8, 1928 issue of *The Magazine of Wall Street*, three companies, the Paramount-Famous Players-Lasky Corp., Loew's Inc., and Fox Film Corp. led the way, having gained the most interest in their stocks, through their acquisitions of theaters and their mergers with independent chains. The magazine reported further that "...the ultimate benefit will accrue to those companies having the best and most strategically located theatre outlets." [17]

Thus, "the day of the giant monolithic production/exhibition greats had arrived; major film studios acquired deluxe coast-to-coast outlets for their products in the ornate showcases and were embarking on impressive construction programs for further outlets."[18] To facilitate this nation-wide construction program, the architects who had worked for their home-town independent exhibitors to design numerous theaters for vaudeville and film, now stood by as experienced professionals to fulfill the wishes of the big studios. The most prominent among the group of architects who managed to catch the eyes of the top studio moguls, eager to build the ultimate palaces for

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[15] Ibid., 249.

[16] Preston Kaufman, *Fox - The Last Word: The Story of the World's Finest Theatre* (Pasadena, CA. Showcase Publications, 1979), 6.

[17] H.W. Knodel, "Position and Outlook for Four Leading Moving Picture Companies," The Magazine of Wall Street, Nov. 3, 1928, 39-40.

[18] Kaufman, *Fox - The Last Word*, 6.

the exhibition of their films, were Thomas W. Lamb of New York, George and C.W. Rapp, Walter W. Ahlschlager and John Eberson of Chicago, and C. Howard Crane of Detroit (fig. 1).

## Chapter Two

## The Practice of C. Howard Crane: (1885-1952)

### Early Years of Traditional Design

Following his death in August, 1952, C. Howard Crane's obituary in the *Architectural Record* read:

> C. Howard Crane, Detroit and London architect who had designed more than 200 theaters in this country, died August 14 at his home in London. He was 67.
>
> Mr. Crane began the practice of architecture in Detroit and maintained an office there after he moved to London 20 years ago. Earl's Court of London, 118 ft-high arena seating 30,000, was among the structures for which Mr. Crane was architect; it was built over a network of six railway lines without stopping a single train during construction.[19]

While Earl's Court is acknowledged as a highlight of Crane's late career, it was less recognized that his two hundred or more theaters, designed between 1909 and 1932, mostly for the exhibition of motion pictures, were Crane's greatest and most significant achievements.

C. Howard Crane was born in Hartford, Connecticut on August 13, 1885.[20] His name first appears in the Hartford city directory of 1903, working at the early age of eighteen, as a "draughtsman" at 78 1/2 Church Street. At the time he was living at 177 Ashley, with his father Charles E. Crane, a butcher.[21] The 1904 city directory gives the same information, omitting Crane's

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[19] *Architectural Record*, October 1952, 392.

[20] Mary Catherine "Kitty" Crane Gushee (Grosse Pointe, Michigan), telephone conversation with the writer, 11 February 1992. Unable to verify Crane's date of birth in Hartford.

[21] *Geer's Hartford City Directory, 1903* (Hartford, CT: The Hartford Printing Company, Printers and Publishers, 1903), 129.

employment address.[22] Crane's granddaughter "Kitty" Crane Gushee explained that it is not surprising that her grandfather, despite his youth and lack of education, was able to get himself work in Hartford, as he had a personality which enabled him to "weasel his way into anything." The family believes that Crane did not even finish high school.[23]

By the end of 1904 Crane had moved to Detroit.[24] According to Mrs. Gushee, Crane was lured there only after two years of experience in Hartford, because the rapidly growing city acted as "a magnet" for her grandfather's energetic ambitions.[25] In 1905, Detroit was already emerging as an automotive boom-town, and "the fabulous automotive fortunes of Detroit gave birth to some of the city's most overwhelming demonstrations of architectural virtuosity."[26] Playing a leading role in the development of Detroit's architectural maturity was Albert Kahn, who was gaining much recognition for his domestic and industrial designs. Mrs. Gushee emphasized that these two things, the excitement of a fast growing city and the office of Albert Kahn, were probably enough to convince Crane to move to Detroit.[27]

During his earliest years in Detroit, Crane worked again as a draftsman, first for the firm of Albert Kahn and later for the firm of Smith. Hinchman

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[22] *Geer's Hartford City Directory, 1904* (Hartford, CT: The Hartford Printing Company, Printers and Publishers, 1903), 130.

[23] Hartford Public High School, the only high school in Hartford until 1935, has no record of Crane's graduating between the years of 1900-1904.

[24] Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 323.

[25] Mary Catherine "Kitty" Crane Gushee (Grosse Point, Michigan), telephone conversation with the writer, 11 February 1992.

[26] W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 269.

[27] Mary Catherine "Kitty" Crane Gushee (Grosse Pointe, Michigan), telephone conversation with the author, 11 February 1992.

and Grylls.[28] Mrs. Gushee confessed the family story that Crane lied to Albert Kahn about his age in order to be hired into the office. The 1905 Detroit city directory, the first in which Crane appears, lists him as:

> Crane, C. Howard, chf. draftsman
> Field, Hinchman and Smith
> Rm 502, Brush Street[29]

Crane's tenure in the office of Albert Kahn, apparently had only a brief duration during his initial months in Detroit. It was a stepping stone, however, in his quick transition to a higher position at Field, Hinchman and Smith, known since 1907 as Smith, Hinchman and Grylls.[30] In 1907, Crane left Smith, Hinchman and Grylls to become chief draftsman at the architectural office of Gustave A. Mueller.[31] But his stay with the German born architect was short. In 1908 Crane is not listed in the Detroit city directory and by 1909, he appears as:

> Crane, C. Howard, architect
> h. 443 Kirby Ave. W.[32]

Once independently established in late 1908, Crane immediately started receiving theater commissions. First among them was the Majestic Theatre,[33] a small nickelodeon, which Crane designed within a building originally

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[28] Ibid. The office of Albert Kahn, which does not have complete records of employees pre 1920, can not verify Crane's employment. Kitty Gushee, however, does remember her grandfather speaking of the time he worked for Albert Kahn.

[29] *Polk's Detroit City Directory,1905* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co.), 896.

[30] Thomas J. Holleman and James P. Gallagher, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls: 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press,1978), 68.

[31] *Polk's Detroit City Directory, 1907* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co.), 848.

[32] *Polk's Detroit City Directory, 1909* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co.), 803.

[33] A complete inventory of Crane's commissions, totalling 1026 projects, lists the Majestic Theatre as project #21. The Woodward Theatre is listed as #2, however there is no recordof it having been built. Inventory from the C. Howard Crane archives collection, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

constructed in 1883, at 1449 Woodward Avenue.[34] From this point on, Crane's routine of designing offices, residences and store fronts gradually inclined toward more theaters.[35] Why and how Crane managed to specialize in theater design so early in his career is unclear. No theater commissions of note had been executed during Crane's years of employment at the Kahn, Mueller or Smith, Hinchman and Grylls offices. However, ironically in the years following Crane's time in the offices of Kahn and Smith, Hinchman and Grylls, both firms did have significant theater commissions. In 1910 Albert Kahn designed the National Theatre (fig. 2), a building with an ornate facade of terra cotta latticework, which housed vaudeville and moving pictures.[36] In 1913, Smith, Hinchman and Grylls began the design work for the Orpheum Theatre (fig. 3), which was completed in 1914 for the production of vaudeville.[37]

Apparently, C. Howard Crane's early concentration in theater design was as incidental as the fast progression of the movie industry itself. Reflecting back on his career, Crane remarked in 1925:

> ...it would be interesting to narrate the story of the motion picture house from its infancy to its present state of high development, and especially to consider how the architecture of this type of building has kept up with its rapid growth...I might say that I entered the field of designing motion picture houses when the industry was in its childhood, as one who early recognized the possibilities of developing a building especially designed as a motion picture theater.[38]

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[34] Andrew Craig Morrison, *Opera House, NIckel Show, and Palace* (Dearborn, MI.: Greenfield Village & Henry Ford Museum, 1974), 18.

[35] Evaluated from inventory of Crane's commissions, C. Howard Crane archives collection, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

[36] Morrison, 20.

[37] Ibid., 22.

[38] C. Howard Crane, "Observations on Motion Picture Theaters," *The Architectural Forum*, June, 1925, 381.

> Like the Majestic Theatre, Crane's other earliest commissions were straightforward conversions of small stores into nickelodeons. These increasingly common jobs of "altering rooms into 'store shows'" could cost "as small an amount as $500."[39] As in many American cities at the turn of the century, Detroit saw an abundance of these nickelodeons spring up in the downtown area. The Casino Theatre, built in 1906, is known to have been the city's first moving picture house. It was a remodeled store owned by a man named John Kunsky, and was the first of several small nickelodeons that would come to line Monroe Street,[40] a growing entertainment district anchored by two important theaters, the Detroit Opera House of 1898 and the Grand Opera House of 1886.[41] This was the street on which Crane received a major commission, to design "Detroit's first taste of what was to become the movie palace."[42]

The Crane-designed nickelodeons had names typical of the genre, such as the Empire and the Empress (figs. 4-6), both built in 1910. While many of these early works were scattered along Monroe Street and also Woodward Avenue, the city's main street, other nickelodeons by Crane and many others could be found throughout the city, as they were becoming a common staple of every neighborhood.

While Crane continued to plan store conversions for nickelodeons for many years onward, the Columbia Theatre of 1911 on Monroe Street, containing 1006 seats, was the commission that firmly established his career as a theater architect.

> The Columbia was a theatre of firsts. It was the first large moving picture and vaudeville theatre to invade the realm of the nickelodeon on lower Monroe Street, and, indeed, was the first major moving picture theatre in the city. It was the first to use an orchestra to accompany the moving picture and the first to contain a theatre pipe organ. It also was the first large theatre

[39] Thomas Nolan, ed., *Architecture and Building*, May, 1911, 319.

[40] Morrison, *Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace*, 7.

[41] Ibid., 1.

[42] Ibid.

designed by C. Howard Crane, who was later to design virtually all of Detroit's major show places.[43]

The 1912 Detroit city directory lists an A. Arthur Caille as the president of the Columbia and John H. Kunsky as the treasurer.[44] This theater, so great in size and accommodations, must have convinced John Kunsky that Crane was the best theater designer in the city. As the owner of Detroit's first nickelodeon, the Casino, Kunsky soon rose to become the city's premiere theater owner and movie exhibitor. With him on that road to success he took C. Howard Crane, who would design the majority of Kunsky's extravagant motion picture and vaudeville houses.

In counterpoint to the large scale Columbia, Crane's nickelodeon commissions remained plentiful. In 1912 they included the Vaudette on Gratiot Avenue, the Comique on Broadway and the Hippodrome on Woodward Avenue. However, as motion picture audiences grew larger, so did the theaters. In the same year, Crane designed the Garden Theatre (fig. 7) for John Kunsky on Woodward Avenue.[45] With 903 seats, the Garden was "Detroit's first large neighborhood theatre, [and its design] featured a trellised and foliated interior to match its name."[46]

By the end of 1914, C. Howard Crane had had a successful stream of larger-scaled commissions.[47] Reflective of the advancement of the movie

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[43] Ibid., 9

[44] *Polk's Detroit City Directory, 1912* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co.)

[45] The Detroit City Directory for 1916 lists the Garden Theatre, 727-29 Woodward Avenue, as under the management of Garden Theatre Inc. John H. Kunsky president and treasurer, 2205-10 Dime Bank Building.

[46] Morrison, 13.

[47] The inventory of Crane's commissions does not give dates, only project numbers. It lists the Garden Theatre, built in 1912, as project #85 and the Regent Theatre in Buffalo, built in 1914, as project #141. Crane had 17 other theater commissions between the time (1912-1914) of those stated above.

industry, he no longer was receiving as many nickelodeon jobs as requests for theaters which seated anywhere from 350 to 1500. Crane also by this time had managed to promote himself in cities other than Detroit. Theater commissions came from Canton, Ohio, Ontario and several places in upstate New York.

1914 also saw the first national publication of Crane's work. The September 23, issue of *The American Architect*, in an article entitled "The Development of the Moving Picture Theatre." featured three of Crane's recent works. Over a thirteen page spread were presented Detroit's Liberty Theatre, of 1913, the Palace Theatre in Detroit and the Regent Theatre in Buffalo, both of 1914. The text of the article focused on Thomas W. Lamb's 1914 Strand Theatre on Broadway in New York, whose owners proclaimed it to be "...the most beautiful, comfortable and up-to-date theatre in the world,"[48] but the images of Crane's work eloquently expressed his aptitude for elegant design.

Various influences and design techniques of the day can be seen in all three of Crane's featured theaters. The Liberty, around the corner on Farmer Street, the second of Crane's three theaters in the Monroe Street district, was clearly built within the shell of the former Central Presbyterian Church, originally built in 1871 (fig.8).[49] The original use was revealed on the outside by the steep gable roof which rose at the ends of the building (fig. 9).[50] For the theater conversion, Crane chose to reverse the original orientation of the church. The narthex of the church became the theater's backstage and the new

[48] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 39.

[49] "Central Presbyterian Church Converted for Moving Pictures," *The Detroit News Tribune*, 11 Feb 1913..

[50] Morrison, *Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace*, 17.

entrance foyer was put at the former front of the church, extending across the original altar area (fig. 10). It passed across the rear of the auditorium, which could not be expanded beyond the existing building envelope and so was fitted tightly within the former worship space. Decoratively the interior was transformed into a truly theatrical environment (fig. 11). Anchorages of the original trusses were retained and incorporated ornamentally into new pilasters, which were added at both sides of the proscenium. The decoration was in the Renaissance style, with delicate ornament lining the walls and intricately painted garlands and floral motifs spread across the ceiling. The ceiling, lowered and flattened in the remodeling was articulated with shallow recessed panels. This was in keeping with architectural attitudes of the day, which reflected an ambivalence toward historical accuracy in the design of this new building type to house motion pictures. As set forth in an article entitled "The Moving Picture Theatre" in the May, 1911 issue of *Architecture and Building*, the advice was, "The question of acoustics requires thought; and in the long, narrow rooms this becomes a difficult problem with an uncertain answer. Curved ceilings, domes, etc., should be avoided."[51] Ironically, years later, Crane and others went on to use every dome and curve conceivable in their theater ceilings, to add to the decorative effect.

During these early years of Crane's theater work, he would surely have been aware of the many architectural publications with articles following the evolving form of the moving picture theater, as a new building type. Stated in many of these articles was an idea that originated with the nickelodeons, that of luring audiences by the means of theaters with flashy and exciting facades. Encouraging this practice, as well as that of creating breathtaking

[51] Nolan, *Architecture and Building*, 321.

interiors, a 1911 *Architecture and Building* article stated,

> The exterior decorations are generally made very gaudy, in order to attract attention; and, as a rule, this is one of the requirements fixed by the owners. The lobby and cash-booth should be made as enticing as possible. The walls and ceilings of the auditorium require a certain amount of decoration to make it bright and cheerful in the eyes of the public, and a highly ornamental proscenium arch is desirable. [52]

Thomas W. Lamb of New York led the way with this ideal, and was considered the earliest architect to master the moving picture theater. There is no doubt of his influence on Crane, who would have seen his work published as early as 1911. Lamb embellished his theaters with Classical ornament, and later became known for his constant use of "Adamesque" decoration, a Roman style adapted in 18th century England.[53]

The interiors of Crane's Palace and Regent Theatres featured in the 1914 *American Architect* exhibited a similar borrowing from the Classics. Using a mixture of eighteenth century Neo-Classicism and restrained adaptations of the Baroque and Rococo, the interiors of these theaters were elegant, with molded panels and ornate columns (figs.12-13). Additionally, the Palace had the added features of draped archways and plaster ornamentation in the form of linked garlands of flowers, all giving the impression of palatial grandeur, consistent the theater's name.

The exteriors of these theaters hinted at the grandness of Crane's later facades. The Regent (fig. 14) shared its front with four commercial spaces. Ironically, with its massing and expression of the structural frame, it slightly resembled the factory and commercial work which Crane would have seen in

[52] Nolan, *Architecture and Building*, 321-322.

[53] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*, 44.

the office of Albert Kahn. The central portion of the facade, though clearly set off the entrance to the theater with a stylish marquee and an octagonal ticket booth. The narrow facade of the Palace (fig.15), on the other hand, featured a single one and a half story arch. Architectural historian Richard Longstreth has termed buildings with this type of facade the " Vault." [54] Crane's use of this motif was in keeping with his adaption of various classical forms. As Longstreth has further noted, while "the vault has no specific historical lineage...[it is] an idea associated with fortified complexes from ancient times through the 19th century, with building elements such as the entry zone of some Italian Renaissance palaces and with monuments such as triumphal arches." Crane may have possibly gotten the idea for the single arcuated facade motif from Albert Kahn's 1910 National Theatre, which stood on the same block as the Palace. Crane would use a more elaborate version of this design again, most notably in his famed St. Louis Fox.

In the November, 1915 issue of *Architectural Record,* there was an article entitled "Planning the Moving Picture Theatre." The author noted the intensity with which the American public was craving the new entertainment medium.

> To satisfy this demand a great number of buildings have been constructed, or,in many cases, altered, the total number of moving picture theatres in the United States being now estimated at over twenty thousand, with a daily attendance of more than five million - one in twenty of the total population of the country.[55]

This fact was consistent with the increasing number of motion picture theater

[54] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide To American Commercial Architecture* (Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1987), 109.

[55] John J. Klaber, "Planning the Moving Picture Theatre," *Architectural Record,* November, 1915, 540.

commissions Crane was receiving each year. The author further added:

> The design of buildings for the exhibition of moving pictures is not a problem of very great difficulty. The auditorium presents few special problems not found in all theatres, and its usually small size and few balconies further simplify the problem.[56]

While the author neglected to acknowledge their ever increasing sizes, he was correct in stating that most of the new theaters were being built with no more than one balcony. Auditoriums without balconies were the rule in Crane's theaters, at least during this early phase of his work.

In the June, 1917 issue of *Architectural Forum*, Crane's Majestic Theatre, built on Woodward Avenue in Detroit in 1915, was featured in the article entitled "The Motion Picture Theatre: Comparison of Two Types of Plan." As in many of his early theaters, including the previously noted Palace and Regent, Crane designed the Majestic along the plan called by some architectural critics the "bleacher type," and by others the "stadium" type. This differed from the "legitimate theater type," which had multiple balconies. In comparing the two, the article promoted the bleacher type as being more practical and economical.[57] The Majestic, seating 1651, was considered the ideal example of the bleacher plan, which was explained as the following:

> It will be noticed that in this type there is no balcony or gallery, but that the floor from the orchestra pit to the back row of seats is practically one continuous sweep. The rear section, as will be observed, is raised at a faster pitch than the usual gradients allowed in aisles, in order to accommodate lobbies, vestibules, foyers, coat room, check room, etc., underneath.
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> In this plan the entrance to the auditorium comes approximately in the center of the interior, so that all seats

[56] Ibid.

[57] Charles A. Whittemore, "The Motion Picture Theatre: Comparison of Two Types of Plan," *Architectural Record*, November, 1915, 540.

> throughout are equally accessible. The entrance from the street to the lobby may or may not be in the center.[58]

In the Majestic, the entrance to the theater was in the center, flanked on both sides by three stores (fig. 16). These "sub-rental" spaces were part of the plan of Crane's Regent Theatre in Buffalo as well, and was considered an additional advantage of the bleacher type. However not much later in time, these rental spaces would also be incorporated in theater buildings of the legitimate type since they supplied an extra means of income and continued to be considered a good investment for theater owners.[59]

The advantages of the bleacher type for the exhibition of motion pictures included comparable, if not better acoustics, ventilation, and most importantly, sight lines, with overall less expenditure. While a greater number of seats could ultimately be obtained by using the legitimate theater type in comparison to that of the bleacher, some critics claimed that it was the bleacher type that could enable every seat in the house to be just as good as the next, and therefore equally desirable.[60] Of course, by the time the large movie palaces accommodating up to 5000 seats were being built, the use of a balcony was a necessity.

Crane and other architects who used the bleacher plan, also realized the the advantage it gave in the placement of the projection booth in relation to the seating levels, and the improvement in the angle of its ray of light. With its low lying arrangement of seats (fig. 17), the bleacher type theater allowed the projection booth to be placed directly opposite the center of the screen. This was considered the most desirable placement for the booth as it achieved

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[58] Ibid., 171.

[59] Ibid., 174.

[60] Ibid., 172.

the correct projection angle. In the multiple balcony plan of the legitimate theater type, the usual placement of the booth above the uppermost balcony would cause the angle of the ray of light to project higher than the screen's desired center.[61]

Crane's interior for the Majestic was elegant, with refined plaster ornament covering the walls and ceilings (figs. 18-19). The auditorium walls had multiple sets of double pilasters bordering sections that contained the box seats. The entrances to the boxes were capped by broken pediments with central urns, while above each entrance was a large oval cartouche linked to adjacent sections by ribbon-like swags. The interior's overall design was a mixture of various borrowings, in particular English neo-classism.

The facade of the Majestic (fig. 20) closely resembled Thomas Lamb's Regent Theatre (fig. 21), built in 1913 and still standing in New York's lower Harlem district. Like Lamb, Crane incorporated an arcade of store fronts on either side of the entrance to the theater. Two rows of arched windows on the second level were reminiscent of Lamb's third level twin loggia. In addition, the surface treatment of the Majestic, with its pattern of diamond shaped tiles, was nearly identical to that of the Regent.

The Regent is thought to be New York's first large theater built expressly for the exhibition of motion pictures.[62] According to theater historian Ben Hall, "Lamb gave the Regent a facade modeled on pure Italian Renaissance lines with an arcade of store fronts reminiscent of the Palazzo del Consiglio in Verona and two well proportioned loggie looking out over Seventh Avenue."[63] Undoubtedly, Crane was aware of the success of the

[61] Ibid., 176.

[62] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 40.

[63] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 105-106.

Regent and was also familiar with Lamb's stylistic inspirations. For while he may have adopted Lamb's Regent as a design idea, it is likely that Crane would have gone directly to the historic source as well. Once having seen the Regent, Crane probably studied directly the Palazzo del Consiglio in Verona (fig. 22) or the Palace of Doges in Venice (fig. 23), which has also been suggested to have been an inspiration for Lamb.[64] Images of both of these famous buildings were easily accessible, and could have been seen by Lamb and Crane in such well known books of architectural history, such as Sir Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method,* first published in 1896. Such books were kept at close hand by architects, who were constantly searching for new sources (Appendix 3). The similarities between the Regent's facade and that of Crane's Majestic thus are not surprising. Borrowing, with only some modification, of earlier, well known and widely published designs would become a common practice among all of the movie palace architects. As they set out to conceive this new type of building, copying not only one another, but specific buildings and styles, became an accepted routine.

> The movie palaces were the offsprings of a long and distinguished collection of buildings, dating back as far as the ancient Greek amphitheaters and through the formal stages of the seventeenth century. Baroque palaces, Mediterranean palazzos, Gothic cathedrals, and the temples of the Far East served to inspire the designers of the grandest movie theaters.[65]

While Crane eventually became known for his broad eclecticism,[66] through

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[64] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces,* 40.

[65] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy,* 17.

[66] Andrew Craig Morrison and Lucy Pope Wheeler, "Orchestra Hall: Detroit: C. Howard Crane Architect," *Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society* (Fourth Quarter, 1989): 4.

the mid 1920's he worked primarily in classicizing modes.[67]

By 1919, most of Crane's theater commissions were buildings to house motion pictures, accompanied by vaudeville. The attitude regarding theater architecture at the time was reflected in the opening statement of the 1915 *Architectural Record* article "Planning the Moving Picture Theatre." The author stated,

> The growth in popularity of moving-picture entertainments during the past twenty years has been one of the most remarkable phenomena of modern life. The regular theatre has suffered greatly from this new form of amusement, and, in addition, a new public has been formed, indifferent to the older drama...[68]

But even though this statement was generally true, there were exceptions and Crane was employed to design several impressive legitimate theaters as well as his numerous theaters for cinema.

In 1914, a symphony orchestra for the city of Detroit was formed, despite that the city did not have a true concert hall. As the orchestra grew in reputation, the position of permanent conductor was offered to the Russian-born pianist and conductor Ossip Gabrilowitsch, who had been a popular guest conductor in previous years.[69] Gabrilowitsch agreed to come Detroit only if the city built a proper concert hall worthy of his talents. Not willing to let pass the opportunity to have a first-rate conductor, the directors of the Orchestral Association decided immediately to build a new hall. C. Howard Crane was selected as the architect.[70]

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[67] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*, 60.

[68] Klaber, "Planning the Moving Picture Theatre," *Architectural Record*, 540.

[69] "Orchestra Hall: Detroit," *Marquee: Journal of the Theatre Historical Society*, 4-5.

[70] Ibid.

Clara Clemens, the wife of Ossip Gabrilowitsch, gave a comical account of the commencement of Orchestra Hall's construction in her book *My Husband Gabrilowitsch*. With Gabrilowitsch having given the Detroit Symphony Society only five months time to take action until the opening of the next season, the committee had to work fast.

> Indeed! Four or five months to erect a hall with every possible modern convenience and luxury? And the money, a million dollars. Where was that to come from? Overnight, too. Gabrilowitsch was absolutely crazy. But it is that sort of craziness that effects the impossible. Within a week or two, as if by magic, the money was raised, the property selected - and paid for. Urgently was it impressed upon the architect that the hall must be finished by a certain date - so urgently in fact that the church standing on the acquired property began to crumble under the hands of the demolishers while a bride and groom were attempting to face the marriage ceremony: "I do take thee to be my lawful-," hammer-hammer-hammer, "-wife, for better, for-," chog-chog-chog, "-worse, for richer, for poorer-" Dust, choking dust! "-in sickness-" Look out! The roof is falling in! "-and in health, 'til death us do-" You better move a little, they are going to blast a wall. It is to be hoped that the poor couple did not take these violent interruptions as an evil omen, but a radical spirit of conquest is like a perpetuum mobile; it can't wait. Most of the time between May and October, workmen had to be engaged in night shifts. It was a thrilling sight, this swift, steady growth of a concert hall in the midst of an industrial city. And in spite of great haste to meet an inflexible date, the magnificent architect, Mr. Robert [sic] Crane, conceived and built a concert hall that not only Detroit, but all America may be proud of. The size was exactly right, both artistically and practically. It seated 2200 people and the acoustics filled the requirements of musical sound. The soft decorations in blue-green shades gave esthetic pleasure - in fact, one fell in love with the place. "Orchestra Hall" was opened on the very date set for the first concert of the season, in the autumn of 1919 - a very Temple consecrated to the holiest Muse.[71]

[71] Clara Clemens, *My Husband Gabrilowitsch* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), 121-122.

Although unfortunate that Mrs. Gabrilowitsch remembered C. Howard Crane's name incorrectly, the great maestro and all of Detroit was greatly impressed with his achievement. With his new associate Elmer George Kiehler, Crane designed the theater in a typical classical mode (fig. 24), using "a restrained and elegant adaptation of the Renaissance style..."[72]

The hall came to be renowned for its superb acoustics, which according to Elmer George Kiehler was "partly a matter of luck." He explained that "when Crane simply built a building that pleased the eye, it was found pleasing to the ear as well."[73] Considering that Crane had no formal training in engineering, it does seem that it was due to luck that he produced the beautifully designed three-step ceiling that gives Orchestra Hall still such wonderful acoustics today. One thing Crane certainly had learned, however, was a sense for flexibility. In addition to being acoustically suitable for a great symphony orchestra, Orchestra Hall contained facilities for motion picture projection and stage productions. This was lucky for the fate of the theater, which did indeed become a moving picture house, as well as a theater for jazz after the symphony left for a larger hall in 1939.[74]

Orchestra Hall's facade (fig. 25) features a central five-bay section at the second and third floors. The facade's only windows above street level are in this section, bordered on each side by Corinthian pilasters, which rest on the entablature of the first story, which is faced in limestone. The capitals of the pilasters are connected by ribbon swags above the second level of windows, and the entire composition of pilasters and windows are capped by an ornamented entablature. The rest of the building is of yellow brick, the main

[72] "Orchestra Hall," *Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society*, 6.
[73] Ibid., 7.
[74] Ibid., 5-6.

facade capped by an elaborate entablature as well.[75] Originally the theater had a wide projecting iron and glass marquee, suspended over the entrance.[76] A drawing of the marquee in the possession of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls, shows the precise care that Crane's office used in designing the smallest and most ornate details of even this minor part of the theater's overall scheme (fig. 26).

It is plausible to speculate that the success of his design for Orchestra Hall brought Crane recognition as an architect proficient in the design of legitimate theaters, as well as those for motion pictures. In the following years, 1921 and 1922, he received two significant commissions from the theater producer Sam H. Harris, for new playhouses in New York and Chicago.

On September 22, 1921, Crane's Music Box Theatre (fig. 27) was opened on 45th Street and Broadway by co-owners Sam Harris and Irving Berlin, with a show called "Irving Berlin's Music Box Revue."[77] As reported by Laurence Bergreen, in Irving Berlin's biography *As Thousands Cheer*, after the opening night, the two men were frightened of the thought of their theater's fate. They had spent far more money than they had ever expected on the entire project, $947,000 for the theater alone, and with the additional expenses of producing the show, they could not afford to take any losses.[78] The investment paid off. The following day the New York Times review of the show proved it be an overwhelming success, and the critic went on to state

[75] "Orchestra Hall." Historic American Buildings Survey, No. MICH-271.

[76] Ibid., 14.

[77] Mary C. Henderson, *The City & the Theatre: New York Playhouses from Bowling Green to Times Square* (Clinton, NJ: James T. White & Co., 1973), 260.

[78] Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990), 179.

that Harris and Berlin "' have builded them a playhouse in West Forty-fifth Street that is a thing of beauty in itself.'"[79] Other comments about the theater ranged from pessimistic views regarding its high cost, "'The boys think they're building a monument, but they're building a tombstone,'" to "'It stinks from class,'" as Berlin remembered the comedian Sam Bernard saying.[80] The Music Box was, according to Berlin, "...one of the few Broadway houses with an interesting facade," and was to him a "dream of a theater."[81]

For many, the Music Box would become a symbol of what attending theater on Broadway was all about.[82] That is, seeing wonderful productions in a theater that was a great production itself. Irving Berlin's biographer stated:

> As plans for the theater began to materialize, the Broadway theater community sensed that something unusual was taking shape in its midst. Designed by C. Howard Crane, a prominent architect based in Detroit, Michigan, the Music Box featured a dignified facade combining aspects of both French Provincial and Italian Renaissance architecture. A loggia and four imposing columns soon loomed above 45th Street, flanked on either side by pavilions. The gray Indiana limestone used for the exterior gave the structure a welcome sense of gravity that effectively offset its whimsical, if symmetrical design.[83]

Whimsical it was in that Crane designed a grand building, but at a domestic scale (figs. 28-29). The facade is characterized by arched dormer windows in a balustraded gable roof, and originally there were shutters at the sides of the two third floor windows, each of which is placed over a second floor Palladian window. The overall effect is that of a Colonial mansion.

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[79] Alexander Woollcott, "The Music Box Begins to Play," *New York Times*, 23 September 1921.

[80] Gussow, "The Music Box Takes a Bow at 50," *New York Times*, 60.

[81] Ibid., 57.

[82] Gussow, 60.

[83] Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 177.

Sam Harris and Irving Berlin placed specific requirements on Crane's design. For instance, there was to be one distinctive second-floor box on each side of the auditorium (fig. 30). Crane distinguished these seating areas by highlighting them with grayish-silver ornamental iron rails centering them in a six-columned niche. "The boxes flowed smoothly into the proscenium, giving the entire auditorium a decidedly sleek finish, as well as superior sight lines.[84]

According to Bergreen, Berlin was particular about the interior of the theater, and emphasized that he wanted "understated luxury." This environment Crane successfully achieved. With a seating capacity of 1,010, Bergreen adds that the "antique ivory and soft green " interior "caused most of the talk, for it was as lavish as any on Broadway, yet restrained..."[85] Indeed this is true, as the New York Times reported the day after its opening that "...there's this odd thing about the theatre itself. It is not only cozy, but beautiful."[86] Berlin also made sure that the feeling of luxury was carried through to the dressing rooms as well, and "they were as lavish and carefully lit as the rest of the theater."[87]

Despite the theater's success, an interesting rumor circulated about the Music Box. Irving Berlin, troubled by the unexpected rising costs of the project, placed part of the blame on Crane, who, he alleged forgot to include a box office. Berlin's biographer Laurence Bergreen tells the story in his book *As Thousands Cheer*:

> It seemed that Berlin, who had always done everything as cheaply as he could, had finally lost control of his finances.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Woollcott, "The Music Box Begins to Play," *The New York Times*.

[87] Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 178.

> Mistakes on the part of the architect added to the theater's expense. Its handsome lobby, for instance, lacked a crucial feature: a box office. Once Berlin and Harris discovered the oversight, they ordered the contractors to cut into the freshly applied plaster and make room for a discreet window....By mid-September, the theater was finished, the box office installed.[88]

Existing original drawings for the Music Box exonerate Crane who did indeed design the lobby with a box office located on its west side (fig. 31). The last revisions for the drawings are dated December 27, 1920.[89] The story of a missing box office is not valid.

Crane was highly commended for the design of the Music Box, not only by the Broadway community, but by architectural critics as well. The theater was prominently featured in a five page layout in the February 1, 1922 issue of *The American Architect-The Architectural Review.* This proved beneficial for Crane's career, for while he would continue to be best known for his motion picture theaters, the design of theaters for the legitimate stage would continue to be a significant part of his work.

By this time in his career, Crane's firm was receiving enough commissions from out of state that the assistance of other architects was necessary. Architect Kenneth Franzheim was one who Crane had come to depend upon greatly, as he worked on many of Crane's projects outside of Michigan. While he may have taken part in the design of these projects, he also may have been hired by Crane simply to provide on-site representation at various field offices, while Crane remained in Detroit. Franzheim first collaborated with Crane for the design of the Roosevelt Theatre, built in

[88] Bergreen, 178,181.

[89] Drawings for the Music Box Theatre, file no. 401, from the collection of C. Howard Crane's original drawings , courtesy of Mr. Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

Chicago in 1921. While Franzheim had not designed any noteworthy theaters prior to his collaboration with Crane, his working relationship with him changed the direction of his career, as he went on to be involved with several other Crane commissions.[90] These included the World Theatre in Omaha, the Earle Theatre in Washington D.C., the James Theatre in Columbus, and the Capitol Theatre in Boston, all of which were designed prior to 1925, at which time Franzheim established his own firm in New York City.

In 1922 producer Sam Harris hired Crane once again, but this time for a project closer to home. Despite any mistakes that may or may not have taken place in the design of the Music Box, Harris evidently remained confident in Crane's work. In Chicago, Harris planned on building "Twin Theatres" with Archie and Edgar Selwyn, who also were prominent New York theater producers. To be called the Harris and the Selwyn, the two theaters were to appear as a single building, its sections virtually identical in style and proportion. Kenneth Franzheim joined Crane again for the Harris/Selwyn project.

On the corner of Dearborn and Lake Streets, Crane and Franzheim designed each theater as a three story, rectangular block, which was connected to the other at the rear (fig. 32). The facades of both theaters were "classically treated," but the interiors were different. Faced with terra cotta resembling stone, each facade has a wide central section with three exit doors on the main floor and a triple arched arcade within its upper portion, divided from the main floor doors by a string course. In the center of each arch is a pedimented

[90] George S. Koyl, ed., *The 1956 American Architects Directory* (New York: A.I.A.and the R.R. Bowker Co., 1955), 180. Kenneth Franzheim's entry states that Franzheim was a draftsman with William Wells Bosworth, N.Y.C, 1913-15; with the firm of C. Howard Crane, Chicago, 1920-23; C. Howard Crane, Boston, 1924-25. Kenneth Franzheim, arch., N.Y.C., 1925.

window, which originally had balustrades. At the north ends of each building is one additional exit door and an inset sign board with another upper story arch above. Inside each arch is a central pedimented niche containing a statue of the Greek muse Terpischore, symbolizing dance. On the south ends of each building is the main entrance with an upper story arch above. These also have a central pedimented niche, but containing a statue of the Greek muse Thalia, who represents comedy. Both theaters originally had matching parapets at the roof lines, balustraded above all five upper story arches. Above the arches of each facade was a classical entablature, each with the theater name incised in the center.[91] The orders of eight Corinthian pilasters were arranged differently in relation to the windows and arches on each facade. The overall affect was that of two matching, albeit slightly dissimilar theaters.

Each seating approximately 48 more than the 1,010 seat Music Box, the Chicago theaters are essentially the same in interior layout as their New York predecessor. Like the Music Box, Crane provided each auditorium with one balcony and one grandly decorated box on each side of the proscenium (fig. 33). More elaborately decorated than the Music Box, the interiors of the Harris (fig. 34) and the Selwyn were described as a "mastery of traditional styles." For Crane's "...classical design vocabulary was never in doubt."[92]

While the decorative designs for the interiors of these theaters came out of Crane's office, credit for their implementation and execution must be given to the decorative firms. For the decorating and furnishing of the Music

[91] "Harris and Selwyn Theaters," *North Loop Redevelopment Project Reliminary Study of Information,* Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, June 1979, 3-4.

[92] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy,* 61.

Box, the William Baumgarten & Company was hired.[93] For the Harris and Selwyn Theatres, Charles Hunter Bettis was the decorator.[94] To complement what was then regarded as the Georgian character of the Selwyn, Bettis lavished the theater with hand carved walnut, complimented by gold and green silk damask hangings. And for the Italian interior of the Harris, Bettis selected carved walnut, touched with gold leaf, and added gold and oxblood hangings.[95]

As Crane's theaters became larger and more elaborate, the role of the decorator would become increasingly important, especially for the movie palaces. As observed by theater historian Ben Hall:

> The movie palace architect's most valuable ally was the decorator, for without him the pleasure domes would have been as barren as dirigible hangars. All through the planning and building stages they worked together to create just the right effect of awe mingled with euphoria on the absorbent ids of moviegoers. The decorator usually moved in after the structure was fairly well completed to deck the hall with boughs of gold leaf and all the other trappings that were his stock in trade.[96]

During the same time that Crane was planning concert halls and theaters for Broadway producers, he remained busy designing motion picture houses of grand scale. In Detroit, Crane's most faithful and ardent client was John Kunsky, who had known Crane's work from the early nickelodeon days on Monroe Street. By 1920, Kunsky already was monopolizing the business of

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[93] *The Music Box Magazine Theater Program,* for the week of August 14, 1922, 16.

[94] "Chicago/Midwest Conclave, 1986," *Marquee: The Journal of The Theatre Historical Society* (Second Quarter, 1986): 6. Although cited here as "decorator," Bettis is credited as being part of Crane's architectural design team, with Kenneth Franzheim, for the Guild Theatre in N.Y.C., 1925, in William C. Young, *Documents of American Theater History: Famous American Playhouses 1900-1971* (Chicago: American Library Assoc., 1973), 65.

[95] Ibid., 7.

[96] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats,* 109,112.

film exhibition in Detroit. Close at his side to help build his large collection of resplendent theaters was C. Howard Crane.

Grand Circus Park (fig. 35), a semicircular area divided by Woodward Avenue and from which several other main streets radiate, became the city's fashionable shopping district after the turn of the century.[97] It was the logical area for John Kunsky to build, and eventually was nick-named "Kunsky Circle" as it became surrounded by his great showplaces.[98] The first of Kunsky's Grand Circus Park theaters was the Madison, built in 1917. With a seating capacity of 1806, in an auditorium that looked similar to Orchestra Hall, Crane's grand style of movie palaces "had almost arrived."[99] It was the Capitol and State Theatres, however, that truly allowed Crane to make his mark as one of the nation's great movie palace architects.

> The broad avenues radiating out from Grand Circus Park were soon lined with these palaces, each competing in architectural grandeur and in the bewitching of their stage and screen offerings. The Capitol Theater (1922) on Broadway and the State Theater (1925) on Woodward were the products of C. Howard Crane. Their lobbies, resplendent with imported marble columns and staircases, served merely as preludes to the glories that lay beyond. It was still the day of the silent film. The mighty Wurlitzer organs thundered when the hero led the Calvary charges and warbled when he won the hands of the heroine.[100]

In his book *The Buildings of Detroit,* Hawkins Ferry's reminiscences of the vibrant activity that took place around Grand Circus Park attest to Crane's contribution to the success of this downtown area. The theaters he had designed for this district by 1925, all for John Kunsky, were the Madison and

[97] Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit,* 323.

[98] Morrison, *Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace,* 18.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit,* 324.

Adams, both of 1917, the Capitol of 1922 and the State Theatre in 1925

Ferry's note about Crane's magnificent lobbies for the Capitol and State Theatres was also well deserved. Crane became well known for the lobby spaces in his early phase of movie palace designs, those theaters built through the mid-1920's.[101] In June of 1925, *The Architectural Forum* dedicated an entire issue to the design of motion picture theaters. The author, an associate of the Chicago office of C.W. and George L. Rapp emphasized the importance of theater entrances and lobbies. He wrote:

> The people of today's hurly-burly, commercialized world go to the theater to live an hour or two in the land of romance. So it is that the sophisticated playgoer must be taken up, on the architect's magic carpet, and set down suddenly in the celestial city of gorgeous stage settings, luxurious hangings and enchanting music. The atmosphere of a king's palace must prevail to stimulate the imagination of those who come within its doors. Yes, even before the patron enters the theater, the architect must stress first impressions through one of the most important architectural problems, - entrance and lobby appeal. The successful theater architect must master the psychology of the theater-goer. He must understand the patron's love of adventure and be able to excite his spirit of romance.[102]

The concept of capturing the patron's "spirit," the minute he walked in the door of the theater,was understood well by Crane. The article featured pictures of Crane's Allen Theatre in Cleveland, built in 1921, as one with a lobby which was designed successfully for this intent. It was said to be "...designed and so well equipped that the fascination resulting from it will keep the patron's mind off the fact that he is waiting.[103] To create such an

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[101] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*, 60.

[102] Bullock, E.C.A., "Theater Entrances and Lobbies," *The Architectural Forum*, June, 1925, 369.

[103] Ibid., 372.

environment, Crane incorporated at the end of the long lobby a rotunda (fig. 36), surrounded by an open colonnade, as the transitional space leading to the the auditorium. The lobby sparkled with opulence from the mirrored walls, coffered ceilings and elaborately wrought lighting fixtures,[104] and was further accented by the theater's overall scheme of relief and flat painted ornament.[105] The rotunda itself (fig. 37) was the feature attraction, said to be "...of unusual impressiveness, the subdued walnut and dull gold tones of its great Corinthian order being most effectively relieved by the rich polychromatic decorations of the dome and the sparkle of the central chandelier."[106]

Crane's Capitol Theatre in Detroit, was built shortly after the Allen and opened on January 12, 1922. It was the largest of Crane's Detroit theaters at that time, seating 3,367 people. Situated between Broadway and Madison Avenue, the Broadway side was the facade which was characterized by three classically treated divisions with engaged Corinthian columns (fig. 38). Retail spaces occupied the central, largest bay and the west bay had an entrance into a small lobby containing elevators to the upper story offices. One entered the theater at the facade's east bay, which was designated by the Capitol marquee. Upon entering the theater, the patron first found himself in a small outer lobby containing the ticket booths (fig. 39). Featured was a vaulted ceiling with back-lighted stained glass panels, but the most impressive architectural treatment of this space was a groin vaulted and marble columned entry leading to a set a stairs to the second mezzanine and then to the balcony. Those patrons with tickets for the main floor or the mezzanine tier boxes had the added privilege of walking through the lobby into a three story foyer

[104] Frary, I.T., "The Allen Theatre," *The Architectural Record*, November, 1921, 359.
[105] Ibid. 367.
[106] Ibid.

containing a grand staircase and two mezzanine bridges (fig. 40), all of which were highlighted by balustrades of wrought iron, painted gold with alternating coral and turquoise ellipses (fig. 41). The foyer curved around the rear of the auditorium and the back wall featured three archways rising the full three stories (fig. 42). These were framed by engaged Corinthian columns, ornate plaster work accented in gold, turquoise and coral, and painted panels containing repeating motifs of cupids, garlands, birds and cameos. Once again, Crane successfully created lobby spaces to beguile the patron to the point of fantasy, even before he entered the auditorium.

In contrast to his previous theaters for motion pictures, such as the Majestic, seating 1,651 people and designed according to the "bleacher" type plan, the theaters Crane designed around Grand Circus Park adapted a new sense of special grandeur. All were designed upon variations of the traditional legitimate theater plan, which incorporates multiple levels. While this change was not necessary for theaters such as the Adams, which with 1770 seats was not much larger than the Majestic, and like the Madison recalled Orchestra Hall, the change was appropriate for a theater as large as the Capitol. To accommodate 3,367 people, Crane included two mezzanine levels and a balcony (fig. 43). The first mezzanine, he explained, was treated "...as a tier of special boxes, obtaining a more exclusive and private seating section, which is very desirable. These boxes continue under the balcony for the whole width of the house."[107]

The ultimate decision of whether or not to incorporate balconies or box seating was left to the theater owner, depending on the desired seating

[107] C. Howard Crane, "Observations on Motion Picture Theaters," *The Architectural Forum* June, 1925, 383.

capacity and the overall effect he desired for the auditorium. Generally every architect, based on personal experience, had his own preferred system for carrying out the specific elements that the owner requested.[108] In a series of articles for *Pencil Points* on the motion picture theater, Crane's New York associate Emil M. Mlinar noted, "Where proscenium boxes are desired by the owners they should be carried in with the loge treatment of the balcony. This gives a better composition than detached boxes and produces the effect seen in theatres where the balcony forms a complete horseshoe. It also brings the the boxes to such a height that they do not interfere with the view of the screen from seats in the auditorium."[109]

While Crane did incorporate detached boxes in most of his other designs, whether the theater was of the bleacher type plan, as in the Majestic, or with theaters of the legitimate type plan, ranging from the Music Box in New York to the Allen Theatre in Cleveland, Crane came to prefer the horseshoe-shaped mezzanine of individually articulated, under the balcony and sweeping around the perimeter of the hall. Previous to the Capitol, Crane had created this same arrangement of box seating for the 2000 seat Orchestra Hall, built in 1919. In that case, six additional projecting mezzanine boxes continued around to each of the side walls of the auditorium, stepping downward toward the proscenium. In the Capitol, the mezzanine level of boxes ended at the side walls, allowing space for a large archway, containing the organ grilles above ground level exit doors. In the 1922 *Pencil Points* series, Mr. Mlinar also pointed out to his readers that in the Detroit Capitol:

...instead of an architectural colonnade, the side walls have been

[108] Ibid., 382.

[109] Emil M. Mlinar, "Motion Picture Theatre Data, Part V," *Pencil Points*, November, 1922, 33.

> treated with silk panels and that the stage box portion and the sounding board have been carried out to a greater distance than in any of the other theatres. This was done for the purpose of bringing the front of the theatre to the people in the balcony as much as possible, in this way avoiding the necessity for any additional treatment.[110]

While Crane noted the desirability of the special seating offered to those in the mezzanine boxes, he did not want to neglect patrons in the balcony. In order for them to feel intimately a part of the auditorium, the effort mentioned by Mr. Mlinar, to extend the front of the theater toward the balcony was incorporated. Additionally, Crane developed aesthetically pleasing approaches to the balcony, so as to keep the patron from feeling that he would be separated from or inferior to the rest of the audience, as had been the case in nineteenth century theaters. Crane stated, "One very interesting point developed in this theater is the run of the stairways. Those, for instance, at the second mezzanine level are designed with elliptical terminals, lobbies and other interesting points which give the impression that the uppermost seats in the balcony are in no way difficult to reach."[111]

Of course the other privilege offered to those in the balcony was a closer view of the auditorium's large domed and coffered ceiling. By this time Crane had moved away from the traditionally flat ceiling, as was recommended by architectural critics during his early years of motion picture theater design.[112] He did continue this practice, however, for the theaters of legitimate stage use, as seen in Orchestra Hall, The Music Box, and the Selwyn

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[110] Emil M. Mlinar, "Motion Picture Theatre Data, Part IV," *Pencil Points*, October, 1922, 39.

[111] C. Howard Crane, "Observations on Motion Picture Theaters," *The Architectural Forum*, 383.

[112] Thomas Nolan, ed., *Architecture and Building*, May,1911, 321. As mentioned previously in reference to the Liberty Theatre, 1913.

and Harris Theatres. In these instances he apparently felt the flat ceiling did allow for the best acoustics. But for the motion picture theaters he was designing in the early 1920's and afterward, which continued to become greater in magnificence as well as in size, the curved and domed ceilings were a preferred feature. By this time, the vaudeville acts and orchestral numbers were not the focal point of the program, as much as was the film itself, which until 1927 was silent. The same acoustical concerns were not important in theaters for the exhibition of silent films, which were accompanied by an orchestra or a large Wurlitzer organ. With their pipes hidden behind ornamented organ grilles at the side walls of the auditorium, "these instruments could literally rock the house."[113] This allowed Crane and other theater architects to take the liberty of designing the ceiling in whatever formation they felt appropriate for the overall decorative scheme.

The Capitol exhibits a mixture of classical elements drawn from various sources. For the auditorium ceiling, Crane chose a system of unorthodox coffering,. which formed unusual geometric patterns that were arranged within the ceiling's vaulted curves and incorporated octagonal lighting coves. The high vaulting of the ceiling, made entirely of plaster, was purely a decorative effect and not structural in any way. The process of suspending the plaster ceiling was an art in itself, which required metal lath to be hung with suspension rods from the roof trusses and then the final application of plaster over the metal lath. In the end, not only was an awe inspiring ceiling achieved, but plenty of convenient attic space was left between the ceiling and the roof.[114]

[113] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 40.

[114] Andrew Craig Morrison, architect (Philadelphia, PA), telephone conversation with the writer, 30 March, 1992.

The Capitol Theatre in Detroit was truly a turning point in Crane's career. However,it was not ground-breaking in the field of motion picture theater design. Equally, if not more impressive, was Thomas Lamb's Capitol Theatre in New York City, with an unprecedented seating capacity for over 5000 people, built in 1919.[115] Also the firm of Rapp and Rapp gave Chicago its first taste of what was to come in movie palace design, with the Chicago Theatre, seating 3,880 people, built in 1921.[116] Yet, for Crane the Capitol was the largest theater he had planned to date and in architectural design, it foreshadowed more than any other theater the shape and appearance Crane's future movie palaces would take.

For three years the Capitol remained the most prominent movie house in the Kunsky chain. But on October 29, 1925, Crane's State Theatre, located on Woodward Avenue at Grand Circus Park, opened with great fanfare. A headline read:

New Kunsky Show House Largest of All
$2,000,000 State Theater Opened to Public Last Week

The article continued, saying that John H. Kunsky had, "added another monument to his already lengthy string of palatial theaters dedicated to the art of motion picture presentation...a stone's throw from Grand Circus Park (see fig. 35), and in close proximity to Mr. Kunsky's Capitol, Adams and Madison Theaters."[117]

Crane truly did create a palatial environment in the State Theatre. The local papers raved over the massive marble staircase leading to the mezzanine (fig. 44), the dazzling colors of blue, gold and touches of pink, and

[115] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 44.
[116] Ibid., 47.
[117] "New Kunsky Show Place Largest of All," *The Detroiter*, 2 November 1925, 9.

the "oriental canopies" on both sides of the house.[118] As might be expected, the State was provided with a large single balcony and a mezzanine tier of boxes. While its seating capacity of 2967 was less than the Capitol's,. the State was much larger in volume than its 1922 predecessor (fig. 45). The State's stage was larger than the Capitol's and Crane noted that he added an unusually deep orchestra pit, "allowing the orchestra to be concealed while the organist is performing, then to be raised to the level of the stage for the overture or concert numbers."[119] Crane again added coffered divisions to the auditorium ceiling, as well as to the barrel vaulted ceiling above the elaborately decorated inner foyer.[120]

Like the Capitol, the State Theatre was housed within an office building (fig. 46). Named the Palms Building, it had retail spaces at the ground level and it rose twelve stories, twice the height of the Capitol, with office spaces occupying the upper nine floors. Theater historian David Naylor has made the observation that "aside from the skyscraper, no building type is more clearly representative of twentieth-century American architecture than the movie palace."[121] If one agrees with this remark, there is an irony that by the early 1920's most of the movie palace architects were often commissioned to design very tall buildings to accompany the theaters or to house them entirely. Their ability to amalgamate both building types has often gone unnoticed.

After the Palms Office Building and State Theatre in 1925, Crane designed the 55-story American Insurance Union Citadel building in 1926 in

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Crane, "Observations on Motion Picture Theaters," *The Architectural Forum*, 384.

[120] Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters*, 149.

[121] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 32.

Columbus, Ohio (fig. 47). Claimed to be "one of the world's highest and most picturesque buildings,"[122] it housed the RKO Palace Theatre, designed by Thomas Lamb. One suspects that the owners of the insurance building, who hired Crane to design their skyscraper, must have decided that they wanted to have the building house a motion picture theater, assuming that it could prove profitable with the right tenant. RKO Pictures, along with MGM, Paramount, Fox and Warner Brothers, was one of the five major motion picture studios that by 1925, was steadily amassing its own chain of theaters in order to control the distribution and exhibition of their films.[123] Evidently, when RKO became the tenant for the theater space in the American Insurance Union Citadel, they insisted upon having it designed by Thomas Lamb, who had become the primary architect for the RKO theater chain. This allowed for the first collaboration between Crane and Thomas Lamb, the "dean of the *standard* school," in motion picture theater design.[124] Lamb designed the interior of the Palace in his standard Adamesque style. The extent of Crane and Lamb's working relationship on this project is not clear, but it seems plausible that Crane would provided the architectural enclosure of the theater, at which point Lamb would have taken over the rest. Lamb's classically treated interior of the Palace Theatre must have proved to have been a startling contrast to Crane's conservatively modern exterior.[125]

While Crane and Thomas Lamb did not collaborate on any other

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[122] *Reproductions of Work Designed and Executed thru The Offices of C. Howard Crane, Architect, Elmer George Kiehler, Ben A. Dore, Associates* (Columbus, Ohio: Pub. by Denny A. Clark, 1929), 15. A I U Citadel featured in advertisement for Masterbuilt Floors: Hardened Dust-proof Concrete.

[123] Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment*, 10.

[124] Hall, *Best Remaining Seats*, 95.

[125] Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters*, 172.

projects, they would both design great movie palaces for William Fox. As the late 1920's brought about the fully developed movie palace, built nationwide by the big motion picture studios, Crane and Lamb would remain constantly aware of one another's work, as well as that of John Eberson's. For while Thomas Lamb maintained the position as the most sought after theater architect of the period, C. Howard Crane and John Eberson were "following on his heels." Later it would be evident that together, "the work of these three architects characterized the whole movement towards luxury and elegance in movie palace architecture."[126]

[126] Dennis Sharp, *The Movie Palace: and Other Buildings for the Movies* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Pub., 1969), 74.

## Chapter Three

## Later Years of Fantasy: The Big Studio Commissions

The architecture of the great movie palace era was not only one of luxury and elegance, but of historic stylism gone wild. Theater historian Ben Hall comically explained this phenomenon best when he said:

> The United States in the Twenties was dotted with a thousand Xanadus. Decreed by some local (or chain owning) Kubla Khan, these pleasure domes gave expression to the most secret and polychrome dreams of a whole group of architects who might otherwise have gone through life doomed to turning out churches, hotels, banks and high schools. The architecture of the movie palace was a triumph of suppressed desire and its practitioners ranged in style from the purely classic to a wildly abandoned eclectic that could only have come from men who, like the Khan himself, 'on honeydew had fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise.' [127]

Important changes in the motion picture making industry directly influenced stylistic changes in motion picture theaters. By the late 1920's the major Hollywood studios had already embarked upon the acquisition and construction of proprietary movie houses, providing the studios with complete control over not only production, but distribution and exhibition as well.[128] Under the patronage of the studio chains theater architecture changed from traditional to more exotic modes.[129] The movie studios' decision to commission architects who would create even more exotic theaters reflected what they interpreted to be the public's changing taste. As explained by theater historian David Naylor:

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[127] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 93.

[128] Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment*, 10.

[129] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 109.

> Even in the early twenties there was a growing boredom with Old World styles. The country was changing fast-the postwar boom, the jazz age, flappers, prohibition-and its tastes changed just as fast. Americans wanted to live glamorous lives, and the movies began to reflect their desires. The time was ripe for the palace architects to throw away the old molds and join the spirit of the age.[130]

Naylor also suggests that events such as the historic discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922 had influence on America's changing taste and consequent hunger for exotic cultures. This was evidenced by the numerous theaters that began to be built using Egyptian, Central American and Far Eastern cultures as stylistic models.[131] Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre, built in 1927 in Hollywood, remains one of the most flamboyant adaptations of a far off land. Of course the studios' main purpose for exploiting these exotic cultures in the design of their movie palaces, as well as in the movies themselves, was "...purely economic in nature; to draw patrons to the box office."[132] The studios' essential concept for how to make a profit never changed, only did the stylistic approach.

Another change in the industry came with the advent in 1927 of sound, which meant that the studios had to invest additional funds in the equipment for the presentation of "talkies."[133] At the same time, architects had to work with acoustical engineers in order to assure that their designs would suit the new technology. The incorporation of the Vitaphone and the Movietone systems, and their varied speaker systems was entirely new for the

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[130] Ibid., 67.

[131] Ibid., 83.

[132] Ibid., 32.

[133] Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment*, 10.

theater architect.[134] For the sound to reach out uniformly over the auditorium, a 1928 news article stated, "such close mathematical figuring has never before been so necessary in theater construction. Size, shape and materials always have to be taken minutely into consideration in planning acoustical treatment."[135]

The immediate and universal acceptance of sound systems for the new talkies had little effect on theaters' production facilities. The fully developed movie palaces were still planned with complete stages and great pipe organs. Studios were hesitant to eliminate the live parts of their programs, fearing that sound films might be a fad. Adolph Zukor decided that his Paramount-Publix Theatre empire could pace their sound installations over a five year span. The Publix stage-show circuit was still very popular, as were the stage shows and orchestral numbers accompanying most of the studios films.[136]

In 1918 Mary Pickford, the most famous screen star of the silent era, left Adolph Zukor and Paramount Pictures to form her own independent company.[137] In 1919, Pickford saw one of her "dearest dreams fulfilled-the formation of United Artists."[138] Attracted by the concept of an artist as an independent producer, with the ability to distribute one's own films more efficiently, became a tempting venture for many other film stars. Joining Pickford and together constituting the original members of United Artists were Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and D.W. Griffith.[139]

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[134] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 247, 251.

[135] "Acoustics of Detroit's Fox Prove Its Suitability For Sound Movies," *The Detroit Free Press*, 22 July 1928.

[136] Hall, 250.

[137] Mary Pickford, *Sunshine and Shadow* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1955), 112.

[138] Ibid., 115.

[139] Ibid., 136.

As her former boss Adolph Zukor joined the ranks of other studio moguls by acquiring and building theaters to create their own chains, Pickford, too, realized that United Artists "...could survive only by continually modernizing [its] setup,"[140] including the plan to create its own chain of key theaters across the country. Joseph Schenk, hired by Pickford to manage United Artists, brought in producer Samuel Goldwyn in order to help this "small-time distribution company without dibs on a single major first-run theater in the country." With the teaming of Goldwyn, who in 1924 had left Metro Goldwyn Mayer, the company he had co-founded and which still retained his name, Pickford, Fairbanks and Schenck created the United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc.[141] C. Howard Crane became their principal architect.

By 1927, the individual studios had established ongoing relationships with their favorite architects. Both RKO Pictures and Loew's Inc., which was the parent company of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, chose Thomas Lamb as their principal designer.[142] The Paramount-Publix chain, incorporating Famous Players-Lasky Corp., under the reigns of Adolph Zukor, primarily retained the services of Chicago's firm of Rapp & Rapp.[143] Crane worked as principal architect for both United Artists and for Fox Film Corp. Following the manner of their respective architect, each studio adopted its own stylistic look. Starting with his United Artists commissions, Crane's best theaters are considered to be those of this later period, which was stylistically

[140] Ibid., 143.

[141] A. Scott Berg, *Godwyn* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1989), 162.

[142] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 44.

[143] Ibid., 60.

quite different from his "earlier classical output."[144] Crane was commissioned to design three theaters for United Artists, one in Los Angeles, one in Chicago and one in Detroit. The same stylistic theme was chosen for all three of the theaters, Crane's uniquely unorthodox adaption of Spanish Gothicism. It is today often said that Mary Pickford herself selected Crane as the architect, as well as the ornate Spanish Gothic design based on her fascination with European castles.[145] How true either of these statements may be cannot be known. However, it is evident that the Los Angeles United Artists Theatre was Pickford's personal favorite and that she was personally involved with the project throughout. Some of her involvements included turning the first shovelful of earth commencing construction, having Crane design a private screening room below the auditorium for her own use, insuring herself a focal spot in one of the two giant auditorium murals depicting the achievements of the motion picture industry (fig. 48), and of course giving the final word of approval after inspecting the completed theater.[146]

The 2,214-seat United Artists Theatre, the studio's flagship house, was built in 1927 at 929 South Broadway in downtown Los Angeles' thriving theater district.[147] A preview description before its cited opening date of December 26th stated:

> Done entirely in Spanish Gothic style, the big house has been declared by art critics to be the most perfect achievement of its kind in the country. The notable combination of massiveness and delicacy that is a feature of the old Spanish cathedrals has

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[144] Ibid., 114.

[145] "The United Artists Theater, Los Angeles, California," *American Movie Classics*, September, 1989, 2.

[146] "Southland's Finest Theater Completed" *Los AngelesSaturday Night*, 10 December 1927, 2.

[147] Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Knapp Press, 1981), 104.

been retained in the gorgeous treatment of the entire theater.[148]

While it may be debatable whether Crane's United Artists actually received rave reviews from art critics, the combination of massiveness and delicacy in its interior was truly achieved (figs. 49-50). Patrons in the auditorium were surrounded by soaring Gothic arches and half circular fan vaults made of plaster, in imitation of the lace-like stone work typical of sixteenth century Spain. It is believed that Crane may have copied details from the Cathedral at Segovia for much of the plaster decoration.[149] But despite Crane's historic source of inspiration, everything was given the added touch of Hollywood drippings (fig. 51). David Naylor has described the decorative treatment above the organ screens and at the proscenium opening as resembling "stalactites," giving the overall effect of a "cave-Gothic interior."[150]

Gold-painted Gothic elements were also to be found in the three- story grand lobby, in which Crane recalled the nave of a Spanish cathedral, with the addition of frescoes decorating the groin vaults (fig. 52). Overlooking the lobby were two double-decked bridges connecting the two stairways leading to the mezzanine and balcony (fig. 53). Stairways from the lobby also led to the basement level, where the added accommodations of the fully developed movie palace often were. The stairway at the east, or Broadway side of the lobby, led to an elegant smoking room and Mary Pickford's screening room. The stairway at the west end led to the ladies rest room and a nursery, where one could conveniently leave children while attending a show.

While many rooms and spaces of the United Artists were regarded as

[148] "Southland's Finest Theater Completed," *Los AngelesSaturday Night*, 2.
[149] "The United Artists Theater, Los Angeles, California," *American Movie Classics*, 2.
[150] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 114,116.

breath-taking, the most remarked upon highlight was the illuminated gold and silver ceiling dome in the auditorium (fig. 54). Lacking Gothic precedent, Crane included it for the effect of pure glitz. Described in 1927,:

> The dome of the auditorium culminates in a huge sunburst, worked out in rich metallic gold and silver colors, through which a luminous blue background glows through to represent a summer sky.[151]

The facade of the theater was designed by Crane as part of a 12- story office frontage designed by the Los Angeles architectural firm of Walker & Eisen (fig. 55). In this case, Crane found himself in a collaborative arrangement not unlike the American Insurance Union Citadel building that housed the RKO Palace Theatre in Columbus, but this time with the situation reversed. The partnership between United Artists and Texaco for the occupancy of the building obviously allowed for each company to hire its own architect. Crane may, however, have had some influence over Walker & Eisen's design, as the Gothic tracery of the theater facade climbs the building's exterior to form a crown of arches and soaring spires. The terra cotta facade also displayed alternating sets of arched and pinnacled Gothic windows with enshrined statuary between them and, as the focal point, a large Gothic window over the theater's marquee (fig. 56). A theater facade, especially when part of a larger office building, had to be eye-grabbing in order to attract the attention of the potential patron passing by. Therefore, "while rarely as opulent or exotic as the interiors, the facades were still quite distinct from the surrounding cityscape."[152] Crane followed this criterion in the decorative treatment of the United Artists facade, with its usual canopy and vertical

[151] "Southland's Finest Theater Completed," *Los AngelesSaturday Night*, 2.

[152] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 32.

marquees.

By 1927, the time of the United Artists' completion, the combination of motion picture palace and tall office building was not unusual. A 1926 article reflecting on the progress of motion picture theater architecture stated:

> In metropolitan cities palatial picture houses and sky scrapers which are the crowning glory of mighty theatres below had a prominent place on the main thoroughfares of the leading cities of America...Everywhere the motion picture theatre has by this time become a potent factor in the architectural development of communities...All the arts - painting, music, sculpture and architecture - combine to complete their beauty...Understand why patrons visit the motion picture theatre and you understand why architects plan as they do. People come to the motion picture theatre to live an hour or two in the land of romance. It is "their" theatre.[153]

The United Artists Theatre, at 140 Bagley Avenue in Detroit, contributed to the ever increasing inventory of theaters around Grand Circus Park (see fig. 35). Opened on February 3rd, 1928, it too was housed within an office building, in this case designed by Crane (fig. 57). Not quite as ornate as the United Artists in Los Angeles, the building rose eighteen stories. It was faced in orange brick over a 2-story stone base distinguished by a two story arcade of windows and entrances ways. The top was lined with a row of round-headed windows. Overall, it was designed in the conventional scheme of a skyscraper, incorporating a base, in these cases distinguished by two story arched windows; a shaft, marked with repetitive office windows; and a crown or capitol, integrating two or three more floors of offices with small windows and topped by a decorative cornice. The entrance on the facade's left end led to the office lobby, while the entrance to the right, marked

[153] John F. Barry, "The Motion Picture Theatre," Paramount Pep Club Year Book for 1926, quoted in "Times Square Paramount," *The Theatre Historical Society Annual*, no. 3 (1976): 3.

by a broad canopy marquee and a seven story vertical sign, led to the lobby of the theater.

Across the street the United Artists Building was the Michigan Theatre, designed by Rapp and Rapp in 1926 for the Paramount-Publix chain, and which had a spectacularly soaring ten-story vertical sign clearly visible from Grand Circus Park. Although the United Artists sign was slimmer and more modest, Crane undoubtedly wanted his United Artists to be distinguished from its next door neighbor. However, the final United Artists design was no match for Rapp and Rapp's Michigan Theatre. In examining the Michigan Theatre it has been said that "in its combination of extravagant lavishness and the lightness of the Rapp & Rapp 'touch,' this theatre presents an architectural counterpoint to the equally elegant but often more ponderous style of the Crane office."[154]

After entering the United Artists and purchasing a ticket in the rectangular outer lobby, the patron entered the grand lobby through one of two large archways. This central lobby reflected Crane's ability to create unique lobby spaces. Its circular plan resolved the awkwardly angular transition between the Bagley Street entrance and the unusual axis of the egg-shaped auditorium, an angle dictated by Grand Circus Park's unique radial street plan (fig. 58). Once in this rotunda, one was surrounded by eight two-story arched bays, all of which had pierced gold balconies and overhanging canopies. Only two of the bay's balconies were accessible as look-out points from the mezzanine foyer; the rest had smoky mirrors behind them. Six of the eight bays were access ways, two to the outer lobby, two to the mezzanine and lobby stairs, and two to the auditorium foyer. The remaining two bays

[154] Morrison, *Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace*, 19.

were blank and led nowhere, incorporated only to complete the lobby's symmetrical scheme.

The Detroit United Artists auditorium (fig. 59), seating 2,070, displayed the same heavy drippings of Spanish Gothic decoration as the Los Angeles theater. It too featured a gilded dome, lace-like fan vaults and massive ornamental canopies over the proscenium and organ screens.[155] The only features that distinguished the Detroit auditorium from its Los Angeles predecessor were with the addition of "a few Indian maidens," and a lessening of the stalactite clustering.[156] The overall appearance of the two auditoriums was quite the same; Crane even had the same plaster molds that were used in Los Angeles used again to create the interior ornament in Detroit. Both Crane and Thomas Lamb proved most successfully that they "...learned the economy of duplication."[157] The studios responded favorably to this practice, since it gave their theater chains a distinctive and memorable stylistic identity, as well as cutting down on building expenses.

In 1928, while Lamb was designing a series of Loew's theaters characterized by a "Mexican Baroque" style,[158] Crane continued in full force with the United Artists' "Spanish Gothic" theme. Simultaneously with Detroit's, the Chicago United Artists Theatre opened at 45 West Randolph Street. It too displayed Spanish Gothic ornament, with the same pierced plaster work for fan vaulting and canopies over the proscenium and organ screens (fig. 60). The auditorium also had side murals, in this case depicting a Moorish procession; and he added spiral columns at the proscenium's sides,

[155] Ibid., 27.
[156] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 116.
[157] Ibid., 122.
[158] Ibid.,120.

with of course the ever imposing gilded dome. Added touches of Moorish inspiration extended into the lobby, which had black marble columns and a coffered, gilded and polychromed ceiling.[159]

The Chicago United Artists was created within the envelope of an earlier theater, the Apollo, built in 1921 by the well known Chicago architecture firm of Holabird and Roche (fig. 61). To purchase and remodel the interior of an extent theater was probably considered to be a convenient cost cutting device on the part of United Artists. Still considered a company slowly making its mark, Pickford, Fairbanks, Schenck and Goldwyn all realized that their United Artists Theatre Circuit could never compete against their larger rivals such as Zukor's Paramount-Publix chain and Loew's Inc. The result was, as advised by Goldwyn, that they needed to be very cost conscious. One way of doing this was to form partnerships with some of their competitors, such as Loew's, by buying interest in some of their theaters and therefore not having to build a house of their own in that particular city.[160] Goldwyn may also have known where there was the opportunity existed to purchase and rehabilitate an already existing theater in a city where United Artists definitely wanted their own house.

In Chicago, Holabird and Roche's classically detailed exterior, with its Corinthian colonnades, was left completely intact. The only additions to the facade were the canopy and vertical United Artists sign. The original classicizing interior was torn out. Structural changes included cutting back the stage to a depth of only six feet, allowing the auditorium to be expanded into the original stage volume. While the seating capacity of 1,750 remained

[159] Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters*, 132.

[160] Berg, *Goldwyn*, 162.

essentially the same, this did allow for larger seats and a roomier environment. The original mezzanine was supported by large pillars that formed a colonnade in the lobby. But as the new plan called for a larger lobby, Crane designed a new suspended mezzanine.[161]

According to the his office's project inventory book, Crane was also commissioned to remodel two other theaters for the United Artists chain. They were listed as the United Artists, New York - Globe Theatre, #601 and the United Artists, Kansas City - Alteration,.#606. As the United Artists Theatre in Chicago was listed as project #626, the New York and Kansas City jobs were previous to it. However, there is no record of these plans ever having been executed. The Globe, a legitimate theater designed in 1910 by the firm of Carrere and Hastings, was eventually converted to a movie house in 1932.[162] But there is no record of that it was done by Crane or for the United Artists Theatre Circuit.

By the time of the big movie studio commissions, Crane's architectural firm was well established. The 1926-1927 Detroit city directory listing for Crane read:

> Crane, C. Howard, architect
> Elmer George Kiehler and Benjamin A. Dore Associates
> 4th floor, Huron Building. 542 Griswold
> h. 8162 E. Jefferson Avenue.

Crane's home address, of 8162 East Jefferson Avenue, verified his status. The address was that of the Detroit Towers, built in 1926, in the prominent neighborhood of Indian Village. A promotional brochure for the eighteen-

[161] All information on the Apollo and Chicago United Artists Theatres,demolished in 1990, courtesy of the Theatre Historical Society, Elmhust, Illinois.

[162] Mary C. Henderson, *The City & the Theatre: New York Playhouses from Bowling Green to Times Square* (Clifton, NJ: James T. White & Co., 1971), 251.

story building, designed in an "early Italian period," stated that it was "located in the heart of Indian Village. Twenty minutes from Grand Circus Park. The charm of an ideal home without responsibility."[163] Ironically, this tower whose golden turret still overlooks the Detroit River and Belle Isle was designed by one of Crane's fellow movie palace architects, Walter W. Ahlschlager. Ahlschlager, whose firm was located in Chicago, was best known for his 1927 design of the 5,920 seat Roxy Theatre in New York, built for the great film exhibitor Samuel "Roxy" Rothapfel, and one of the most awe-inspiring motion picture theaters of all time. Ben Hall humorously called Ahlschlager's Gothic/Moorish/ Renaissance, bronze and gold coated Roxy, "the climax of twenty years of evolution in one of the richest and most imaginative and transitory schools of architecture since the discovery of the keystone."[164]

While Ahlschlager must have stunned most of the movie industry with his mind-boggling Roxy Theatre, William Fox had his eye on the recent works of C. Howard Crane. A 1928 *Detroit News* article explained Fox's eventual hiring of Crane with the following story:

> In due course of time Crane presented himself to William Fox. Fox told Crane he had an architect and wasn't interested. Then Crane had many opportunities to play golf with the picture king. Never once did Crane mention his ambitions as an architect. He was much more concerned with his brassie shot or a long putt, but in the meantime Crane mailed several samples of his achievements and notices of his work to Fox.
>
> Finally, three years later, when they were playing golf together and had reached the eleventh hole on the Engineer's Course, Fox said point blank to Crane, "How would you like to do some work for me?"
>
> Naturally there was no hesitancy on the part of the

[163] "Detroit Towers: Eighty One Sixty Two Jefferson East," promotional advertisement, source unknown.

[164] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 121.

> Detroiter and he is now busy designing and directing millions of dollars worth of theaters.[165]

While William Fox may have been a frequent golfer at the Engineers Course, a golf course for the elite set of Long Island's North shore during the 1920's, the extent of Crane's golfing relationship and accompaniment of Fox on such outings is questionable. But a persistence on Crane's behalf to expose his work to Fox, in hopes of acquiring future commissions, is likely to be be true. According to Crane's granddaughter Kitty Gushee, Crane "loved the glitzy life, and its not surprising that he would have been attracted to Hollywood types and have gone after these bids."[166] Perhaps due to the great success of Crane's Los Angeles United Artists, Fox finally had confidence that Crane was the architect who could help him continue to build his vast empire of first-run motion picture palaces for Fox Film Corporation.

Crane's first Fox theater opened on August 31, 1928 in Brooklyn, New York and was part of Fox's ever expanding empire. A November 3, 1928 article in the *Magazine of Wall Street* reported:

> Fox Theatres Corp. now controls more than than 325 individual theatres and is considering the acquisition of an additional 150 to 200 theatres in the Greater New York area. These additional theatres and the greater output of feature films will add substantially to the income of Fox Film Corp.[167]

But William Fox's bigger plan was to have huge picture palaces "on a nationwide scale" all with a seating capacity of more than 3,900. Besides

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[165] Buda Baker, "Crane Evolves the Modern Movie Theater," *The Detroit News*, 4 March 1928.

[166] Mary Catherine "Kitty" Crane Gushee, interview with writer, Grosse Pointe, MI., 10 March 1992.

[167] H. W. Knodel, "Position and Outlook for Four Leading Moving Picture Companies," *The Magazine of Wall Street*, Nov. 3, 1928, 70.

Brooklyn, the key cities chosen for this expansion were Detroit, St. Louis, San Francisco, Atlanta[168] and Philadelphia. Crane was given the commissions for all but of these theaters except for San Francisco.[169] The San Francisco Fox was designed by Thomas Lamb, who had done a considerable amount of previous work for The Fox Film Corporation. The Atlanta Fox, although Crane did some initial designs,[170] was completed by the firm of Mayre, Alger & Vinour.[171] The Detroit Times on February 17, 1928 stated:

Architect Confers

> C. Howard Crane, architect for the Fox Theater here, was en route to Atlanta, Ga., today to confer with William Fox, owner of a chain of movie theaters throughout the country, about the building of a theater in Atlanta.[172]

Although Crane designed initial plans for the Atlanta Fox, it may be that the final decision to hire Mayre, Alger & Vinour was decided upon by the local Shriners club, who had a partnership with William Fox since the theater complex was to contain their lodge hall.[173] However it is possible that Fox continued to seek consultation from Crane in regards to Mayre, Alger & Vinour's estimates and designs. The practice of seeking consultation from one architect regarding the work of another was part of Fox's economic planning process, and meanwhile Crane's own work was being evaluated by Thomas Lamb (Appendix 4).

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[168] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 127.

[169] Project numbers are given for Fox theaters in Brooklyn, Detroit, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Atlanta, in the Crane office project inventory book. Courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

[170] The Crane office project inventory book lists: Fox Theater, Atlanta, GA. Yaarab Temple, # 614.

[171] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 219.

[172] "Architect Confers," The Detroit Times, Friday, 17 February 1928.

[173] Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters*, 101.

In the minutes of a March 24 and 25, 1927, meeting held at the office of William Fox, are several references to recommendations given to Fox by Emil Mlinar. At the time, Mlinar worked for Thomas Lamb, although he had also worked for Crane during an earlier part of his career. In one instance, the original February, 1927 budget for the Brooklyn Fox, of $2,769,240.42, was reduced to a revised budget of $2,281,351.78 in March of 1927. The minutes record:

> This change in price was brought about through Addenda "A" which everyone considered, including Mr. Mlinar of Mr. Thomas W. Lamb's office, established the extent of the savings which could be made on this job.[174]

Another consultation reference, for the Detroit and St. Louis theaters, is made not to cost, but instead to design. It states:

> The question of the stepping of the floors and the slope at each end seat at aisles, which was raised by Mr. Mlinar of Lamb's Office, was left entirely to the decision of Mr. Crane.[175]

After endless budget meetings during 1927 between Fox, Crane and his associates, contractors and consultants, plans for the Brooklyn, Detroit, St. Louis and Philadelphia theaters were finally approved (fig. 62). The Brooklyn Fox was the first of Crane's three Fox theaters that actually materialized. Even though the Depression ultimately prevented the construction of the Philadelphia Fox (fig. 63), which planned to seat over 6,000 people and would have been the largest of Fox's chain, Crane did have the satisfaction of seeing his Brooklyn, Detroit and St. Louis Foxes built.

The Brooklyn Fox, opened on August 31, 1928, was located at 20

[174] Minutes of the meeting, Office of William Fox, New York City, March 24,25 1927, p.3. Courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

[175] Ibid., p.7.

Flatbush Avenue, on a triangular lot that dictated the building's tripartite design (fig. 64). The theater entrance, on Flatbush, close to the corner of Nevins Street, was flanked on both sides by store fronts (fig. 65). There were store fronts also on the Nevins Street side, and offices above in the twelve-story building. The building's triangular shape was what made it most visually appealing, otherwise its exterior was "typical commercial high-rise architecture of its period with a few added touches of Art Deco ornament."[176]

The decoration of Crane's Brooklyn Fox displayed his eclectic style at its best. The interior was a culmination incorporating many of Crane's favorite features which he had used in other successful theater designs. These included rounded spaces, such as the semi-elliptical vestibule, the four story grand lobby which curved along the contour of the rear of the auditorium, and narrow curving passages on the mezzanine and balcony levels which overlooked the grand lobby.[177] The auditorium ceiling, as in the United Artists theaters, had a gigantic triple cove dome with concealed lighting which highlighted the overall golden tone of the auditorium (figs. 66-67).[178]

A November, 1928 *Architecture and Building's* description of the theater's interior revealed borrowings from various cultures. It read:

> the grand foyer...with a height of nearly 50 feet has a grand staircase leading to the mezzanine promenade. The decoration is oriental and rich in elaboration. The lower walls are verde-antique marble with teak wood panels carved and overlaid with a decoration of metallic lacquer...The auditorium...color scheme is gold in changing shades varying from bronze to red and yellow. The velvet drapes are henna. The other public rooms, such as the smoking room and lounge, are decorated in various styles. The smoking room is Spanish and the ladies' room is in

[176] "The Brooklyn Fox Theatre," *The Theatre Historical Society Annual*, no. 9 (1982), 10.
[177] Ibid., 16.
[178] Ibid.,38.

French style.[179]

Most of the decorative elements in the theater were related to a Chinese/Venetian aquatic theme. Amidst Chinese pagodas and murals depicting Venetian scenes with gondolas, plaster ornament took marine forms of shells, fish, dolphins and waves. Free-standing sculptures displayed various fish types, and fish were part of the brass railing designs as well. A fountain, with a cascade flowing into a basin, was mounted at the landing of the grand stairs, and Art Deco pedestal lights at the newels resembled organ pipes rising from pools of water (fig. 68). Kenneth Franzheim, whose New York office was working with Crane may have contributed to the theater's Art Deco elements. In a catalog of his own work, many of the buildings that he designed after his years with Crane were of Art Deco and Moderne styling.[180] All of this mixed with the Chinese/Venetian aquatic theme with additional layers of Italian Renaissance, Baroque and Byzantine detailing must have been an incredible sight to see. It has been said that C. Howard Crane and Associates by this time had a large staff, possibly numbering close to 50 draftsmen, and its obvious that Crane allowed them all to contribute to the theater's rich eclecticism.[181]

On September 21, 1928 Crane's Fox Theatre (fig. 69), in his home city of Detroit, opened to great fanfare. Throughout its months of construction, the press regularly wrote of its progress. Numerous headlines featured the excitement over its gradual development, "Fox Theater Develops Hindu

[179] "Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *Architecture and Building*, November, 1928, 339.

[180] "Kenneth Franzheim, Architect: New York-Washington-Houston," (New York: Architectural Catalog Col, Inc.) year not printed.

[181] "The Brooklyn Fox Theatre," *The Theatre Historical Society Annual*, 5.

Motif," "Toltec Architecture of Maya Period Source of Inspiration For New Fox," "Fox Building Is Different," "Indian Plaster Art Gains Followers," "Interior Work on New Fox Cinema Almost Finished." Headlines continued to be printed revealing the public's anxious anticipation of the theater's completion (fig. 70-71). "400 Rush Work on New Fox," "New Theater Taking Shape," "Theater Nears Completion," "Fox Theater Soon Ready," and finally "Fox Theater Opens Friday!"[182]

The day after the Fox's opening, *The Detroit Free Press* headline read "Fox Opening Is Brilliant," and reported:

> Built on mammoth proportions the theater is original and artistic and is said to be unique in the large theaters of the country for its beauty of line, graceful design and colorful decorations. Jade green and vermillion, with gold, silver and bronze, have been lavishly yet discreetly used, flashing jewels giving an opulent grandeur to the whole. In walls and ceiling are the figures and symbols to be found in old Hindu temples. Detroit's pride in the magnificence of the new theater has a certain interesting note in the fact that a Detroit architect, C. Howard Crane, and his associates, were responsible for the entire Fox building.[183]

According to Ben Hall, however, all the Fox theaters received the additional supervision of William Fox's wife Eve Leo, who took part in deciding what final decorative schemes were to be used. He stated, "when the Fox theatres in St. Louis and Detroit were being built, Mrs. Fox commuted between New York and the other two cities to carry on her work of patrolling suppliers."[184] Detroit newspapers reported Mrs. Fox's periodic stops to the city in order to check on things. Two headlines read, "Fox Decorations Supervised by Wife of

[182] News clippings from the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press from the Crane office scrap book, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, MI.

[183] "Fox Opening Is Brilliant," *The Detroit Free Press*, 22 September 1928.

[184] Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats*, 112.

Owner," and "Mrs. Fox Pleased With New Theater."[185] However, how much final say Mrs. Fox actually had on these projects, with Crane's or any of the other Fox architects' own decorators and suppliers, is debatable. For the Detroit Fox Theatre, Crane used companies that he had used previously on other projects and they would have been more likely to report to Crane on final matters than to Mrs. Fox. For example, for the lathing, plastering and ornamental plaster work, Crane hired the Lennox-Haldeman Company, which also worked on the Detroit United Artists. Another company Crane retained the services of was the F.E. Gates Marble and Tile Company of Indianapolis, which also did the marble work for Crane's Olympia Sports Arena built in Detroit in 1927 (Appendix 2).[186]

The overall style of the Detroit Fox's interior, as well as its identical twin in St. Louis, was labeled by Ben Hall as "Siamese-Byzantine."[187] The auditorium had a height equivalent to an eight story building and seated 5,048 people (fig. 72). Its side walls were linked with mezzanine promenades which stretched behind gigantic red marble colonnades. Behind these were full length blue and gold mirrors reflecting hanging jeweled lanterns. Every arch, cove, and niche was covered with decorative plaster and paint, and the colors were of glowing reds, golds, and bronzes. Other decorative elements included a 13 foot diameter globe chandelier that was made of jeweled glass and hung from the center of the dome-shaped ceiling, which resembled a two-tiered tapestry tent. All niches and alcoves contained deities, lions, dragons and other imaginary creatures from the Far East. Atop the highly

[185] Crane office scrap book, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect.

[186] Suppliers and decorators employed by Crane appear in the C. Howard Crane and Associates Catalogue of past works, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect.

[187] Hall, 110.

elaborate proscenium was a giant gold elephant's head.

This fascinating gaudiness of exotic eclecticism characterized the grand lobby as well (fig. 73). The tones of golds and blood reds were interspersed with silver balconies at various points overlooking from the mezzanine lobby above. The entire lobby was also colonnaded at the sides in red to match the auditorium. Its focal point was the central staircase to the mezzanine. Guarding the staircase were giant reclining lions at the newels (fig. 74). Opposite and above the entrance doors was an elaborate double set of organ pipes, rising to the lobby's ceiling.

Perhaps the most elegant spaces Crane designed in this theater were the elliptical stairways leading from the sides of the auditorium foyer all the way to the top of the balcony (fig. 75). Undoubtedly, like their counterparts in the Capitol Theatre of 1922, they were to keep the balcony patron from feeling set apart from the rest of the audience. Additionally, there was the peacock alley, a long and narrow hall that connected the two end balcony lobbies with small cove areas that formed bridges where one could look out over the grand lobby from high above (fig. 76). These probably were intended by Crane to be intimate areas into which one could retreat within this theater of such enormous proportions. Overall, the building was an experience of exploration.

Once having planned and executed interiors as elaborate and complicated as these, it was only logical to reuse the drawings to build an identical Fox in St. Louis. Beyond this, what more could Crane and his decorators possibly create? As with the United Artists chain, the process of duplication was followed, but this time even more exactly. Eventually the

two theaters were to become known as Crane's "twin" Siamese Byzantine masterpieces.[188]

Opened on January 31, 1929, the St. Louis Fox seated 5,042 people, slightly less than the Detroit auditorium. In fact, the two plans were so similar that at one point they were interchanged (figs. 77-78). In the minutes from the March 24 and 25, 1927 meetings, this decision was noted:

> It was determined to take the Detroit plan, which was 48 feet less over all, and place it on the St. Louis lot which would, therefore, leave a plot 48 feet at the back end of the property, which was to be left open through to Washington.[189]

The only major difference between the two theaters were their exteriors. The Detroit Fox (fig. 79), built in the downtown area of Grand Circus Park (see fig. 35), was housed in a typically, but elaborately trimmed office building with accommodations for several retail spaces. It was ten stories high with an ornamental crown and large second floor windows. The St. Louis Fox (fig. 80), built at 527 North Grand Boulevard, was several blocks from that city's downtown. As office spaces would not have been practical in that location, Crane gave the theater the distinction of having an elaborate facade of its own. Borrowing an idea perhaps from some of his early nickelodeons, Crane gave the facade a large and richly ornate arch rising through most of the building's height (fig. 81). It is a building with this facade motif that architectural historian Richard Longstreth has characterized as the "vault."[190] The St. Louis theater's arch, which curves freely at the top to complement the Baroque terra cotta ornament, is completely filled by one

[188] Mary Strauss and David Naylor, *The Fabulous Fox: St. Louis* (St. Louis, MO: Fox Theatre/Fox Associates), 6.

[189] Minutes of the Meeting, Office of William Fox, New York City, March 24 and 25, 1927, 3.

[190] Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street*, 110.

large window that overlooks the grand lobby inside.

Crane's Fox commissions represented the high point of his career; in 1929 his firm moved into the Detroit Fox Building.[191] Without a doubt, C. Howard Crane and Associates planned this move with the anticipation that it would help to expose potential clients of the firm's capability to create spell-binding structures of enormous scale. However, with the onset of the Depression, Crane was not able to enjoy the fruits of past success. Fox Film Corporation experienced financial problems, preventing the company from completing what would have been Crane's greatest movie palace ever, the 6,300 seat Philadelphia Fox. Its construction was to have begun in August of 1929 on a site at 17th and Market Streets. Then it was postponed until 1930, with a hopeful opening date for the fall of that year. Instead the project was brought to a halt, as troubles in the Fox empire could not be solved.[192] By 1930, the movie studios felt the financial crunch and their campaigns of building chains of immense theaters ended. Crane was unable to secure any other large-scale studio commissions. The phenomenon of the movie palace, its styling and its aim to capture the public's fascination, had come to a close.

The former movie palace architects were forced to re-evaluate their work. Some adopted a stylistic preference for a tamer Art Deco design. According to theater historian David Naylor, the Depression helped to bring about the adoption of this movement, as "an attempt to maintain a richness of design without spending quite so much."[193] This was not always entirely true. Theaters with Art Deco ornament could be flashy and very pricey at the same time. However, a shift toward downplaying and ultimately eliminating

[191] *Polk's Detroit City Directory*, 1929-30.

[192] Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theatres A-Z* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 119.

[193] Naylor, *American Picture Palaces*, 172.

the overwhelmingly exotic and palatial interiors, typical of the movie palaces, was certainly evident. In the September, 1932 issue of *The Architectural Forum*, Samuel Rothafel, whose five year old Roxy was one of the most eclectically mindboggling movie palaces of all time, was now recommending a preference for a very different kind of theater. Using the newly built Radio City Music Hall as the ideal model, Rothafel warned that the architect should avoid "jarring decoration of the lobbies and lounges,"[194] and the "interior should be as neutral as possible, preferably limited to the primary colors."..Then adding,. "I think it is advisable to retain simplicity in the interior treatment, and to devote the money saved to equipping the theater properly."[195] This referred to equipment for sound movies, which had completely captured the public's eyes, and ears, and alone were bringing people into the theaters. Therefore, the primary role of the movie palace was taken away. It was no longer needed for "Lamb, Eberson, Crane and C.W. and George Rapp...to design the same type of basilica-like emporiums to the illusive God of movies."[196]

[194] S.L. (Roxy) Rothafel, as told by John Cushman Fistere, "The Architect and The Box Office," *The Architectural Forum*, September,1932, 195.

[195] Ibid., 196.

[196] Sharp, *The Picture Palace: and Other Buildings for the Movies*, 81.

## Conclusion

After his great studio successes, Crane's firm continued to receive some commissions for motion picture theaters, but mostly for smaller theaters in small towns. The firm's inventory book of projects for the years between 1930 and 1932 list commissions such as the Strand Theatre, Tecumseh, Michigan; the Bijou Theatre, Battle Creek, Michigan; and several theaters in Michigan cities such as Port Huron, Flint, Niles and Kalamazoo.[197] By 1932, Crane was discouraged by his job prospects and financially troubled. In that year, he and his wife Freda moved to Europe [198]

Crane ultimately settled in London, where he lived until his death on August 14, 1952. He retained an office in Detroit, under the management of Dixon Kellogg and Elmer George Kiehler. According to his granddaughter, Crane visited Detroit approximately twice a year to see his son, who remained in the area.[199] Although he made it known that he did not wish to return to the United States, the people of Detroit were still proud of their home town architect, who had become a local celebrity in his day. When Crane visited the city, the newspapers reported it, accompanied by updates of his most recent accomplishments in England. *The Detroit News* on December 30, 1937 reported "C. Howard Crane Returns to Detroit," and spoke of his 1935 design of London's Earl's Court, a $6,000,000 sports complex and amusement center of a proportion that Europe had never seen. On June 5, 1946 a *Detroit News* headline read "Town Talk - Architect's Return!" and stated that now all of the architect's time was dedicated to industrial design. And on November 18,

[197] Crane project inventory book, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect.

[198] Gushee, telephone conversation with writer, 12 March 1992.

[199] Ibid.

1949 *The Detroit Free Press* wrote that as an architect of much success, having built more than 50 theaters in that city alone, unfortunately the "Ex-Detroiter Prefers Merrie Olde England."[200]

C. Howard Crane is still remembered fondly in Detroit, where many of his theaters remain standing. Orchestra Hall, beautifully restored, is once again home to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. The Fox Theatre, also restored, is now one of the most highly attended entertainment facilities in the country. The former Capitol Theatre, currently in the process of restoration, will become the Detroit Opera House, a permanent home for the Michigan Opera Theatre. However, many of Crane's theaters, like those of all the great movie palace architects, have been lost due to neglect and urban decay. It is only with the dedication of today's varied range of committed forces, continuing their effort to bring an increasing awareness and appreciation of this architecture to the public, that we can hope to see the salvation and re-use of these grand buildings. It is crucial that the faithful support of dedicated committees, historical societies, enterprising businesses and arts organizations is continued, not only for the pleasure of preserving a unique time in America's past, but for the necessity of rescuing another part of the crumbling fabric of our cities.

[200] Newspaper clippings courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

C. HOWARD CRANE

Fig. 1 C. Howard Crane (circa 1929)

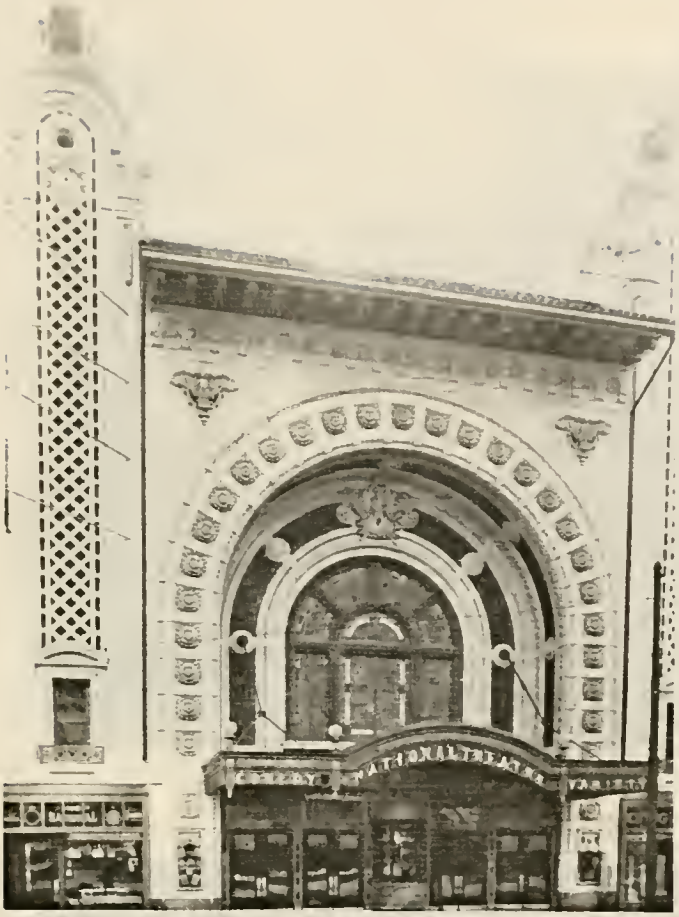


Fig. 2 National Theatre, Detroit, Albert Kahn, (1910)

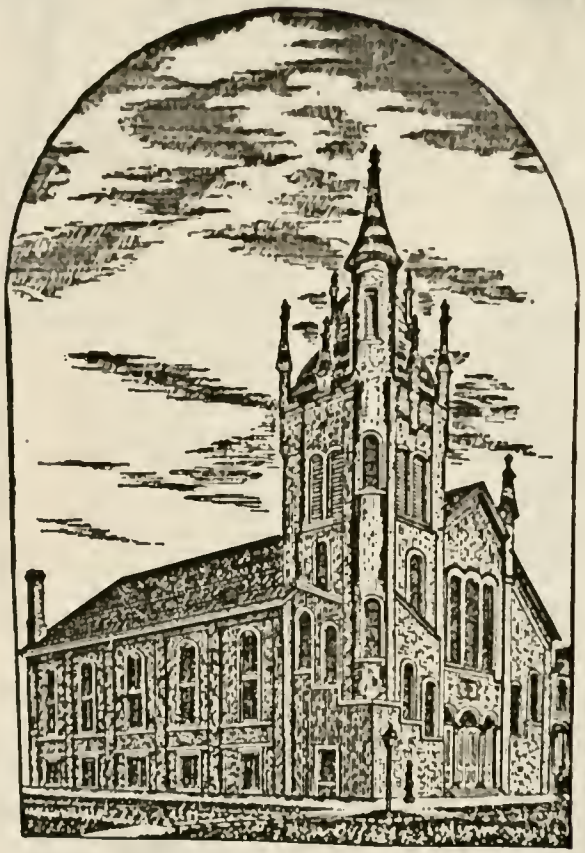
Fig. 3 Orpheum Theatre, Detroit, Smith, Hinchman & Grylls (1914)

Fig. 4 Empress Theatre, Detroit, auditorium (1910)

Fig. 5 Empress Theatre, auditorium

Fig. 6 Empress Theatre, auditorium

Fig. 7 Garden Theatre, Detroit (1912)



THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Fig. 8 Central Presbyterian Church, Detroit (1871)

Fig. 9 Liberty Theatre, Detroit, built within former Central Presbyterian Church (1913)

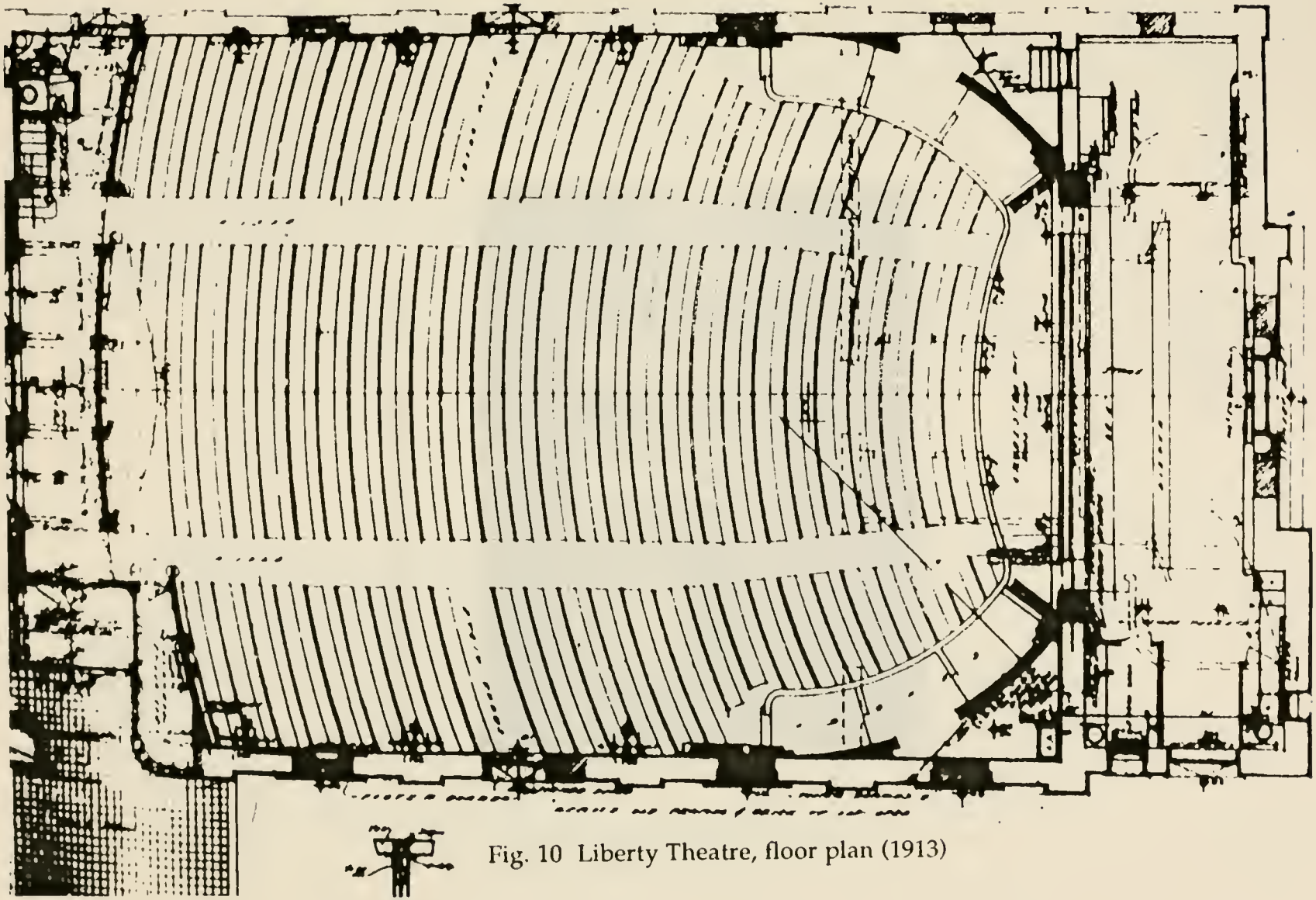


Fig. 10 Liberty Theatre, floor plan (1913)

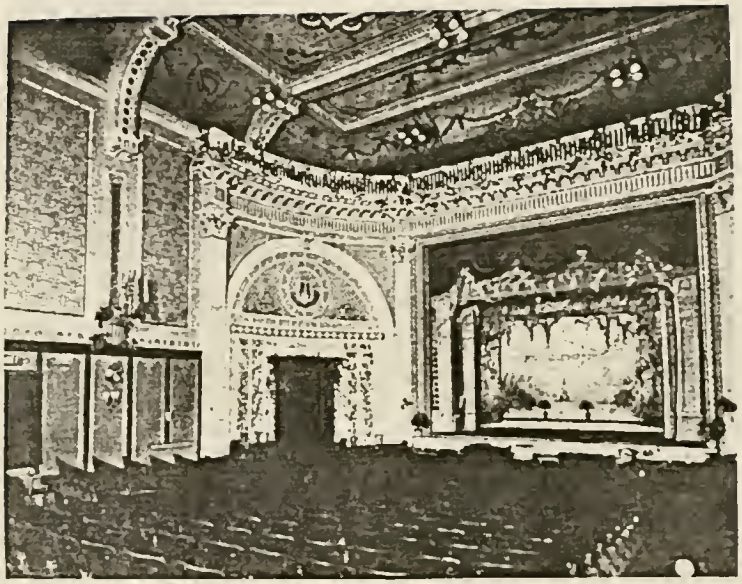


Fig. 11 Liberty Theatre, auditorium (1913)

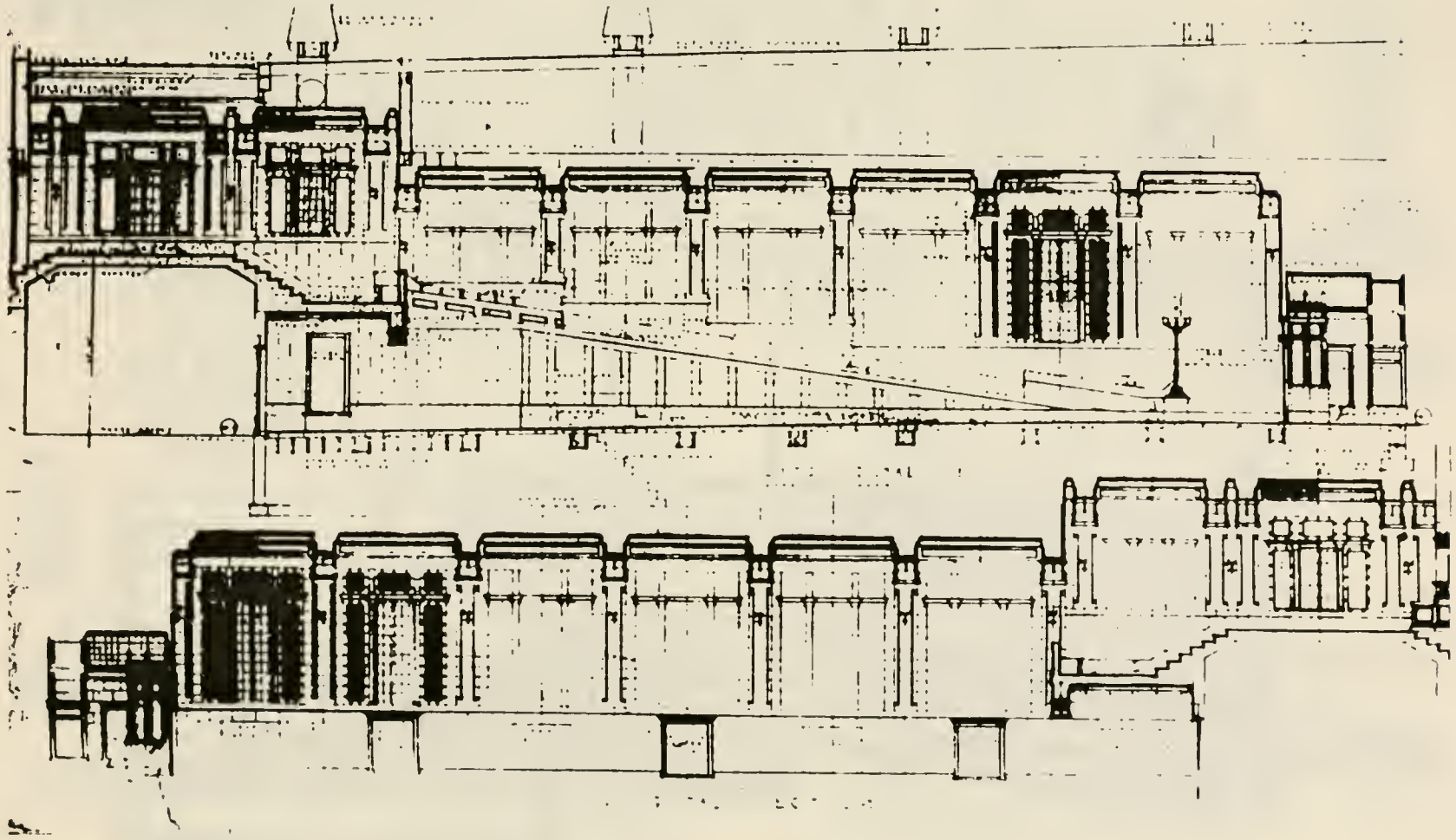


Fig. 12 Palace Theatre, Detroit,
longitudianl section (1914)

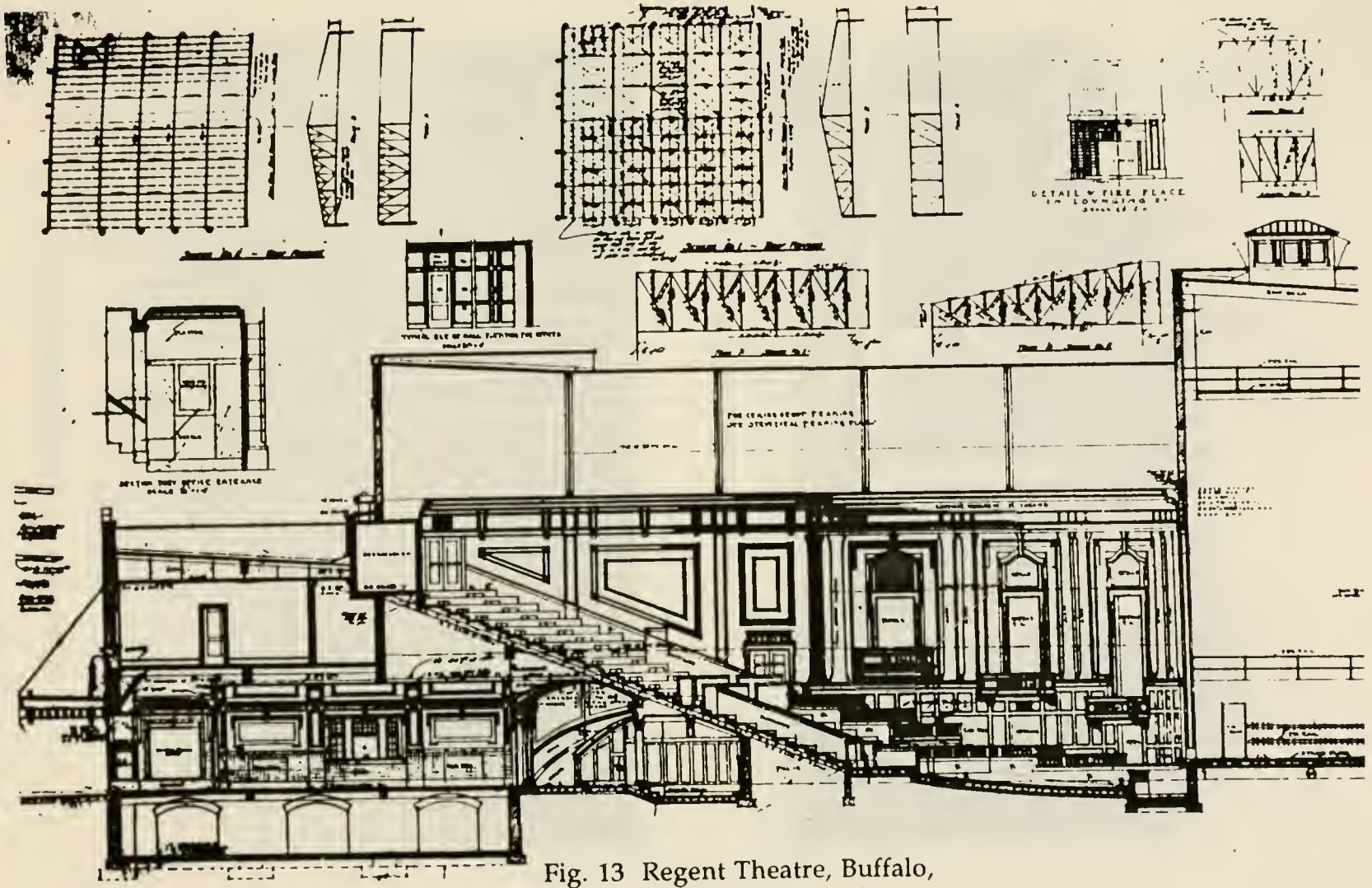


Fig. 13 Regent Theatre, Buffalo, longitudinal section (1914)

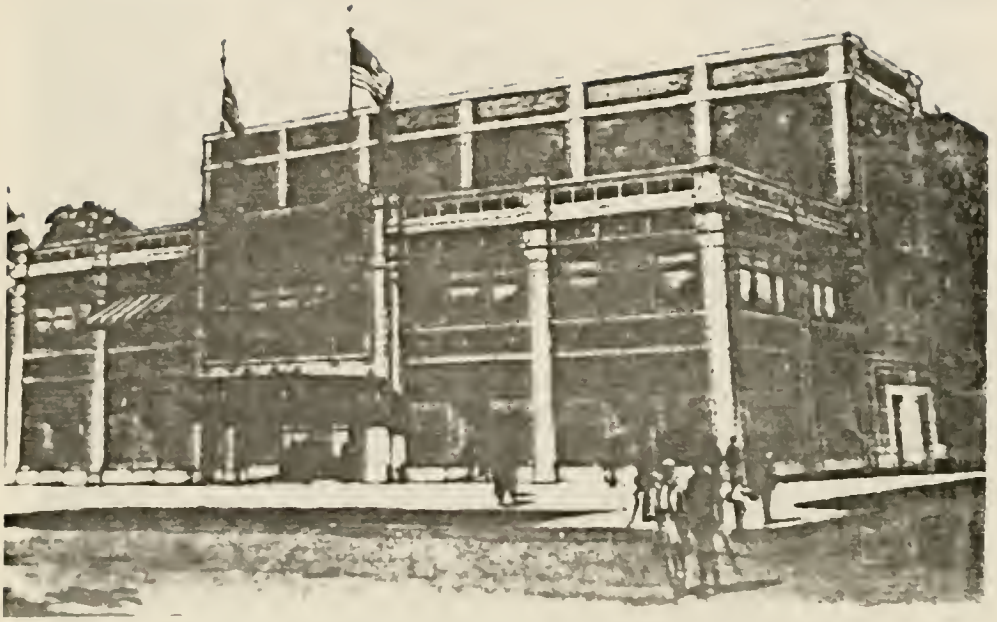


Fig. 14 Regent Theatre, Buffalo (1914)

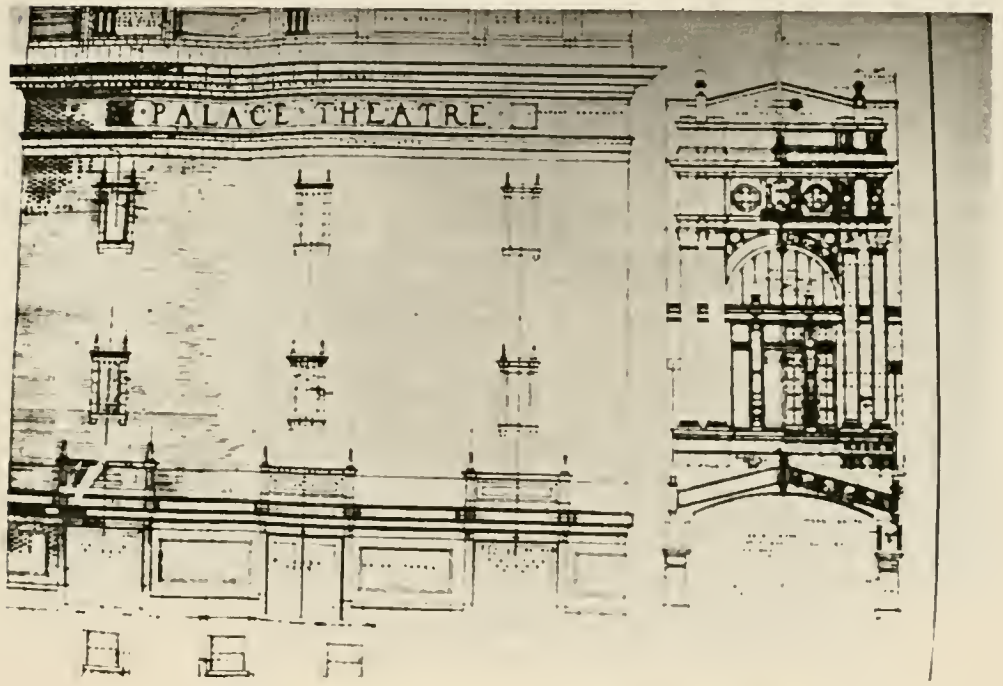



Fig. 15 Palace Theatre, Detroit (1914)

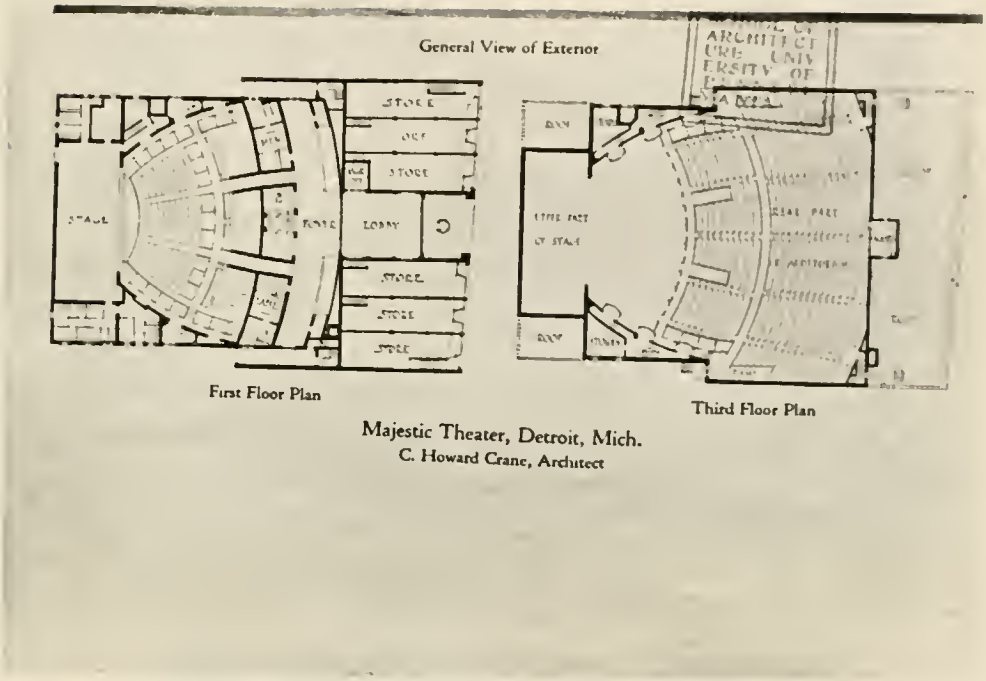



Fig. 16 Majestic Theatre, Detroit, floor plans (1915)

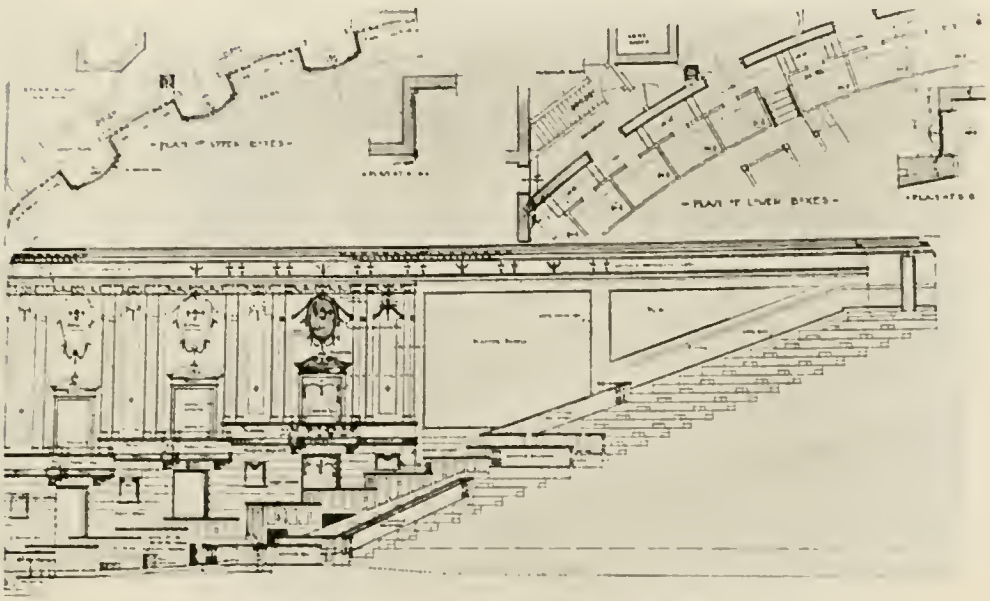
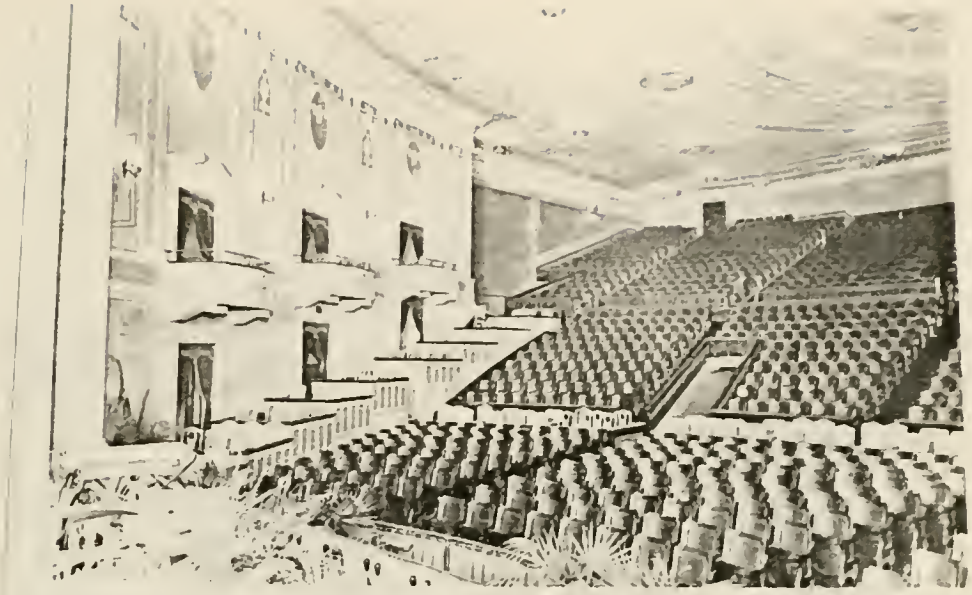



Fig. 17 Majestic Theatre, longitudinal section (1915)

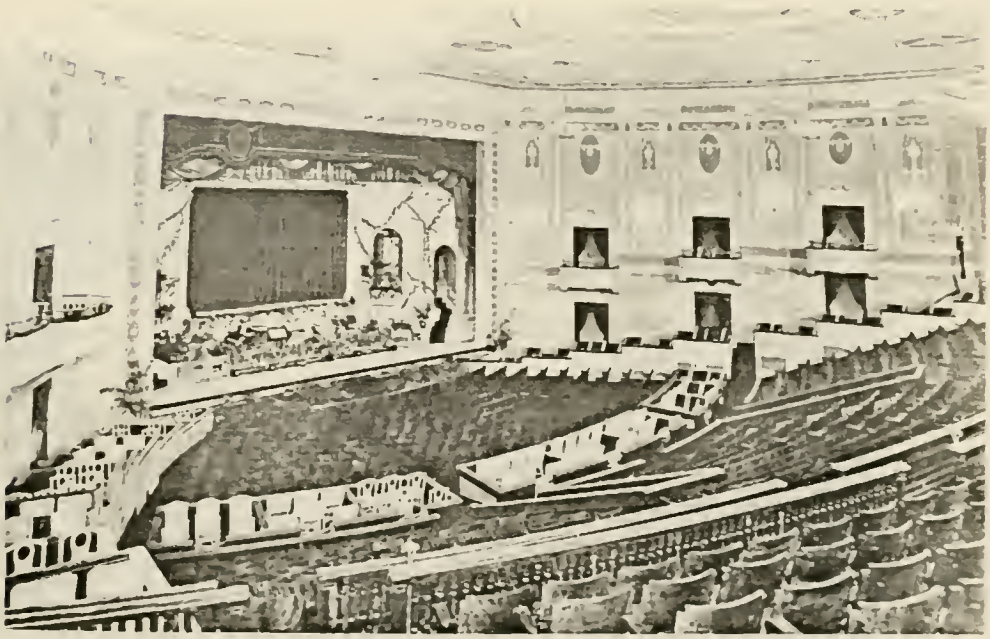


VIEW OF AUDITORIUM AND BOXES FROM THE STAGE

MAJESTIC THEATER, DETROIT MICH

C. HOWARD CRANE ARCHITECT

Fig. 18 Majestic Theatre, rear of auditorium



VIEW OF AUDITORIUM AND STAGE FROM THE REAR

Fig. 19 Majestic Theatre, front of auditorium

Fig. 20 Majestic Theatre, Detroit, (1915)

Fig. 21 Regent Theatre, New York City,
Thomas Lamb (1913)

Fig. 22 Palazzo del Consiglio, Verona, possible source of influence for Crane and Thomas Lamb

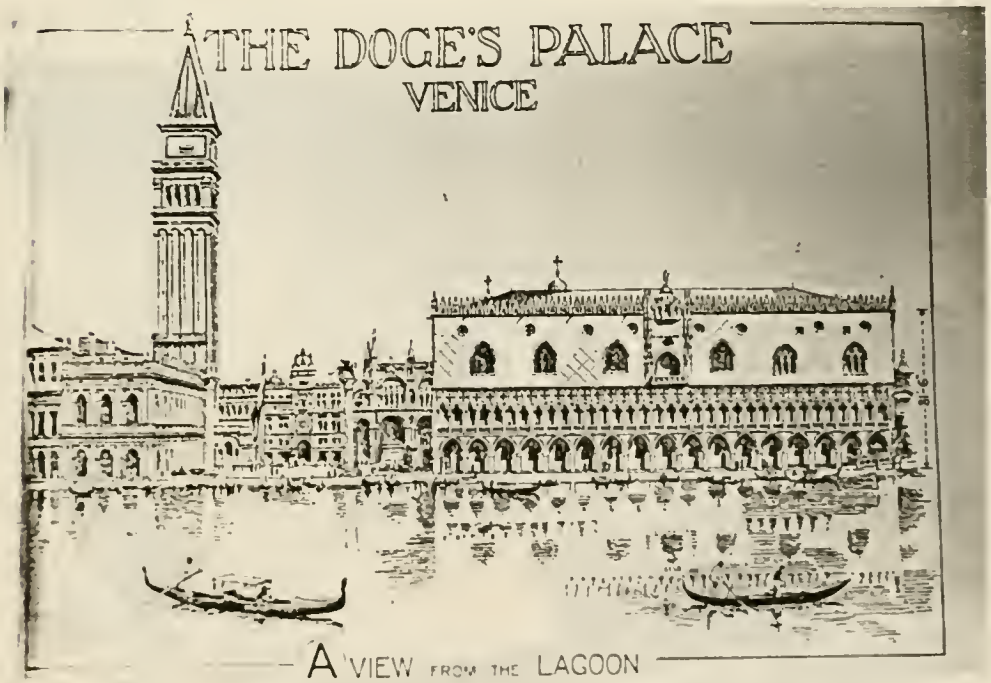



Fig. 23 Doge's Palace, Venice, possible source of influence for Crane and Thomas Lamb

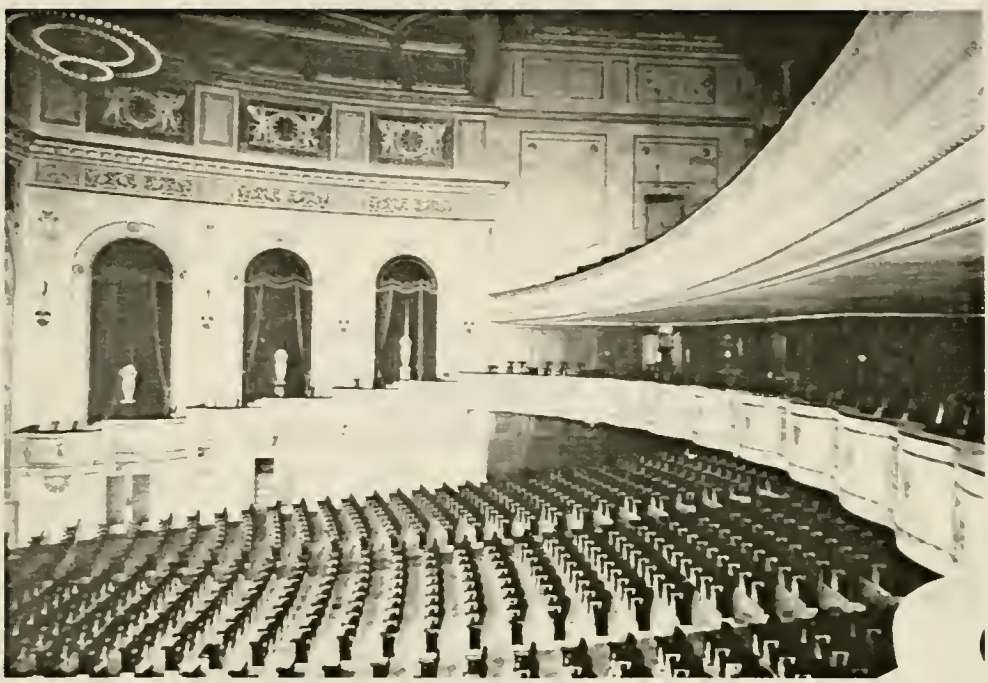


Fig. 24 Orchestra Hall, Detroit, auditorium (1919)

Fig. 25 Orchestra Hall, Detroit (1919)

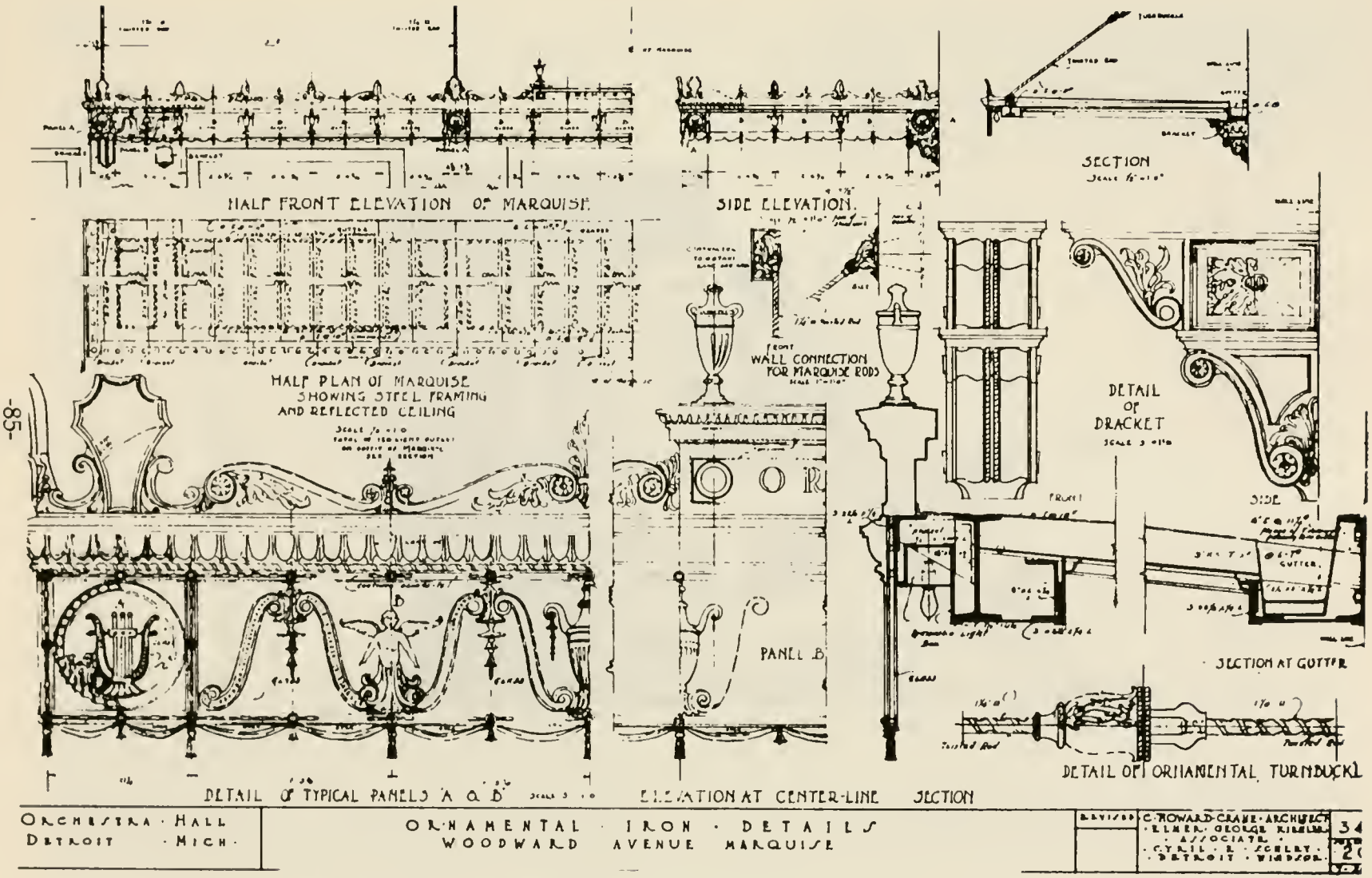



Fig. 26 Orchestra Hall, Detroit, ornamental iron details (1919)

Fig. 27 Music Box Theatre, New York City (1921)

Figs. 28 and 29 Views of present day facade, Music Box Theatre, New York City

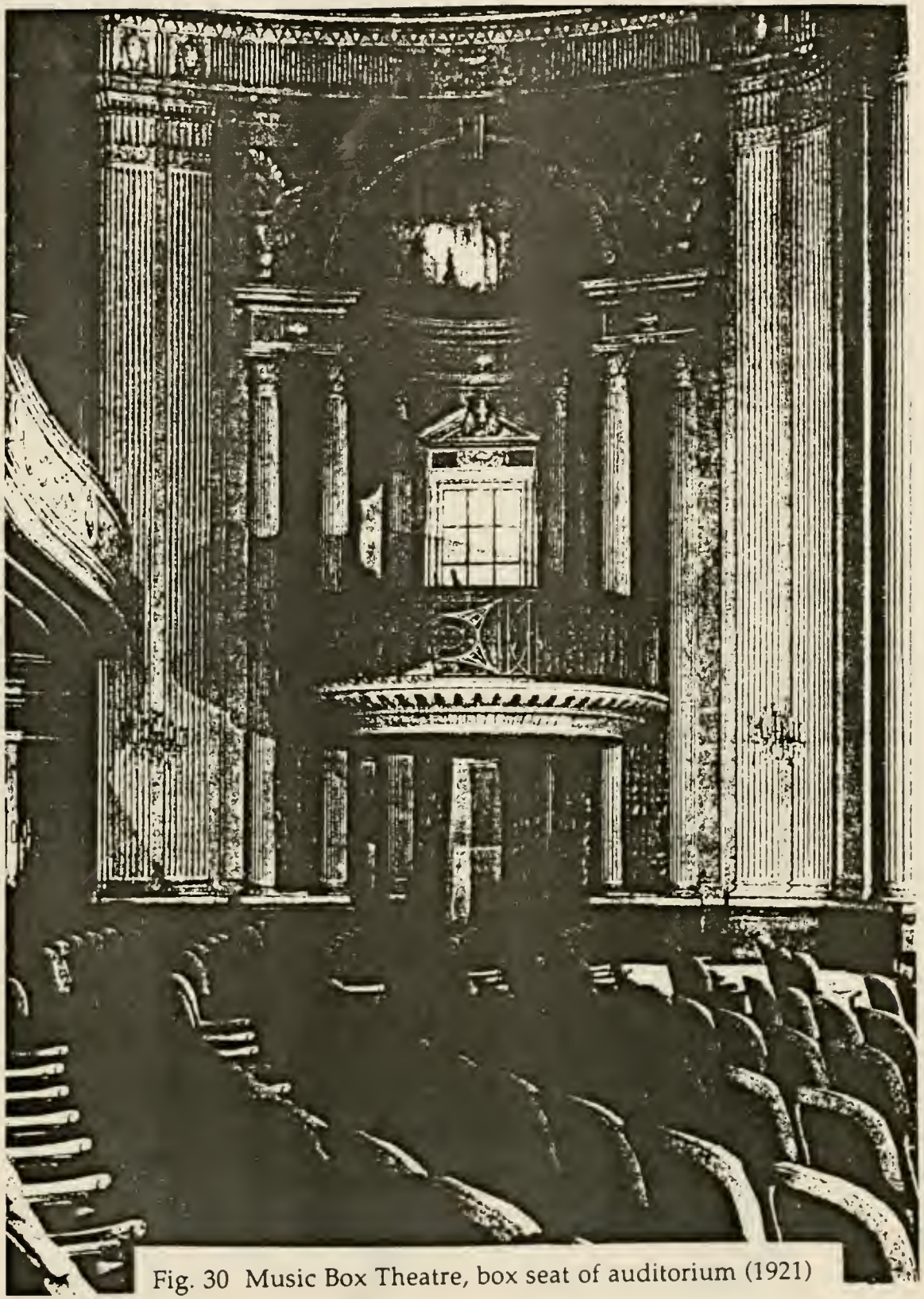
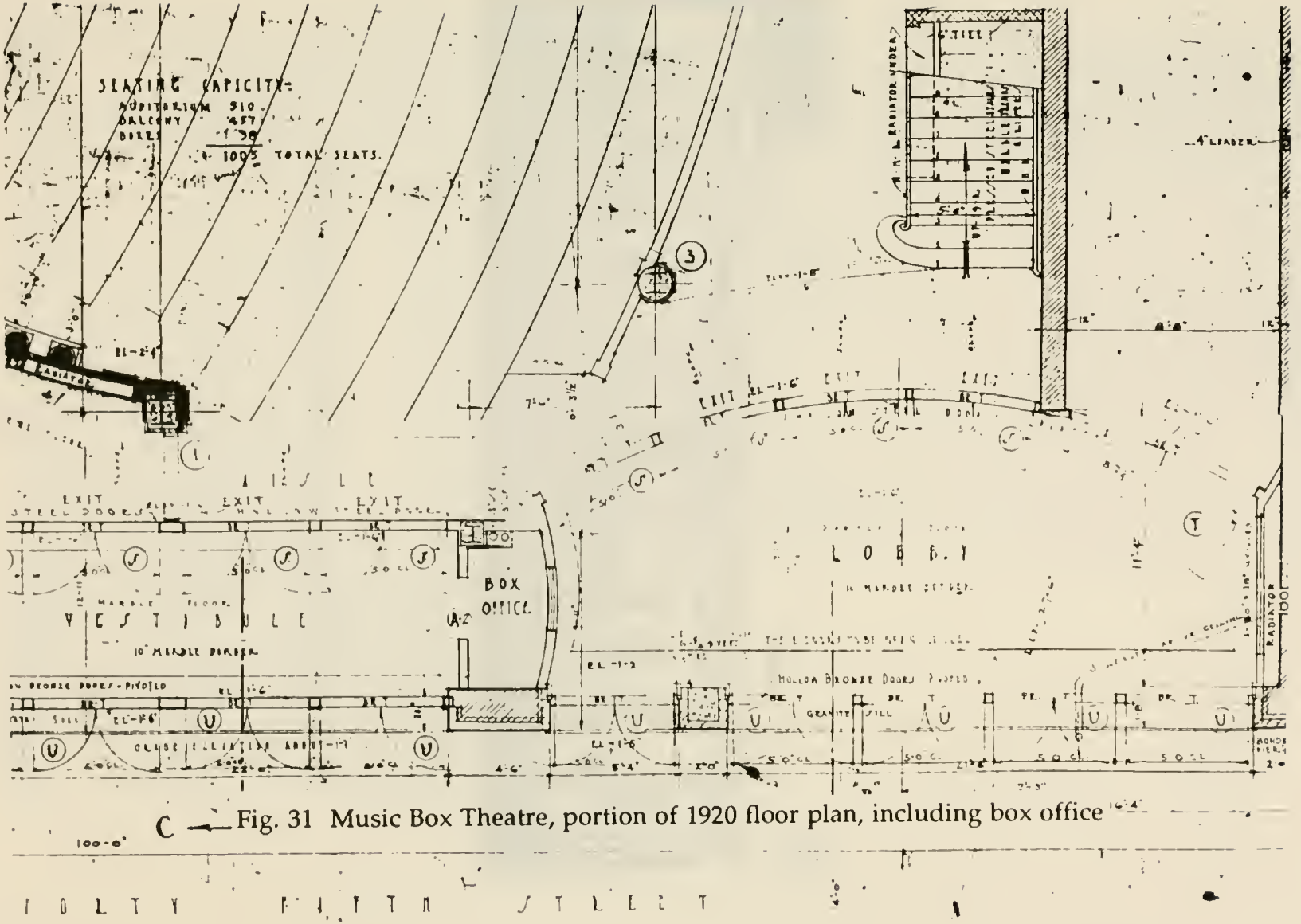


Fig. 30 Music Box Theatre, box seat of auditorium (1921)




C — Fig. 31 Music Box Theatre, portion of 1920 floor plan, including box office

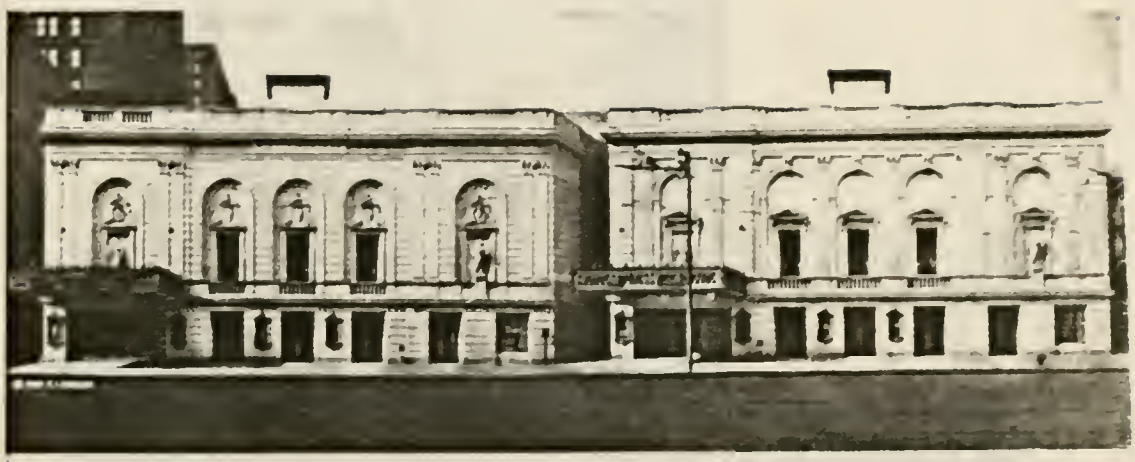


Fig. 32 Harris and Selwyn Theatres, Chicago (1922)

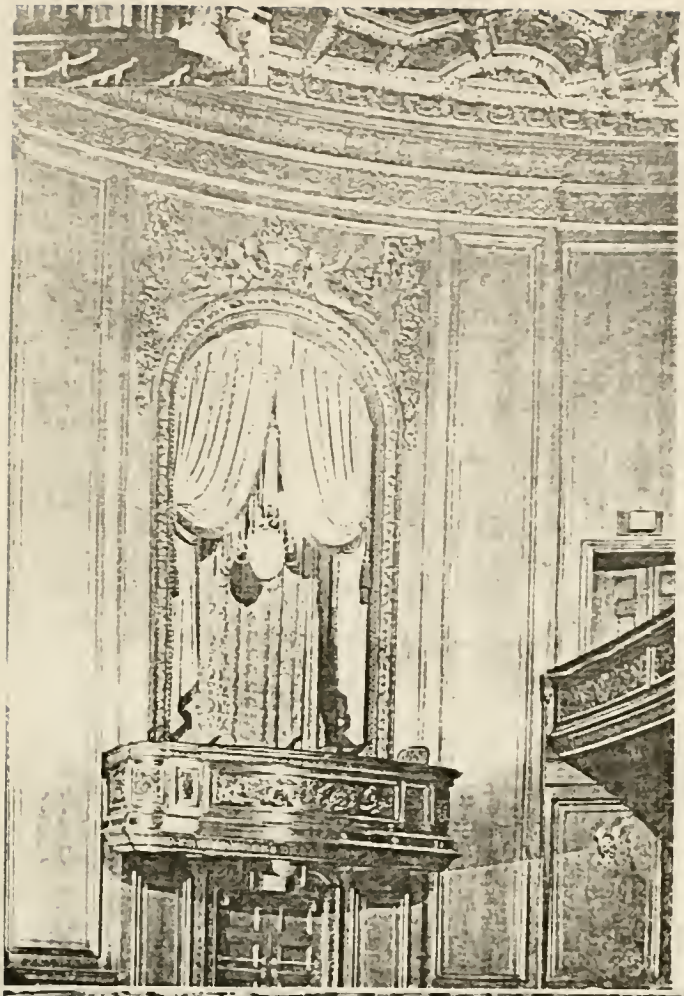
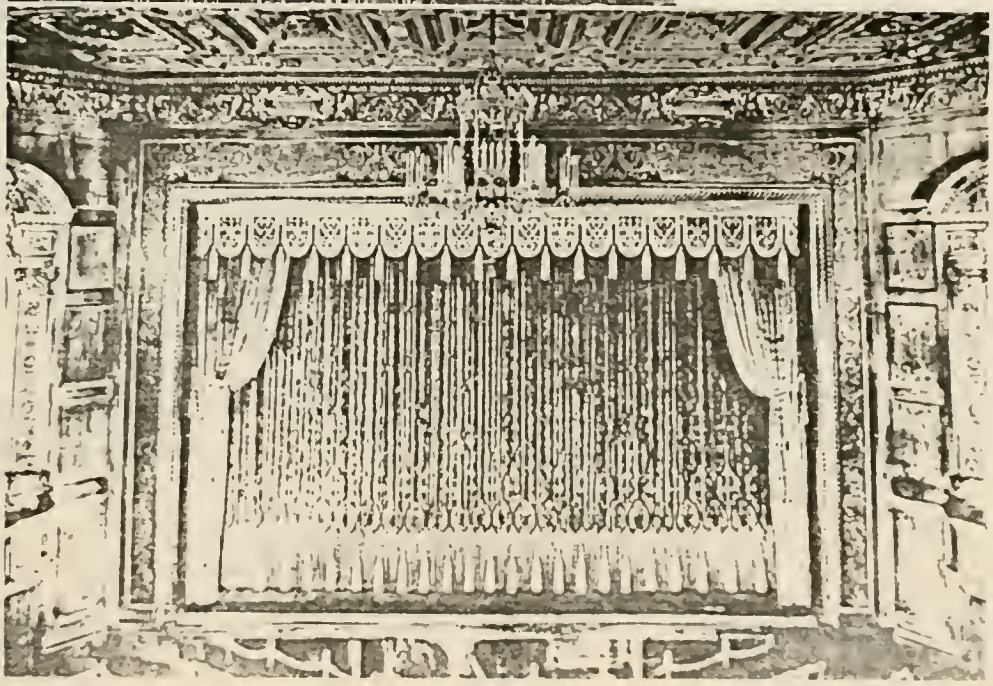


Fig. 33 Selwyn Theatre, box seat of auditorium (1922)

Fig. 34 Harris Theatre, stage and proscenium (1922)



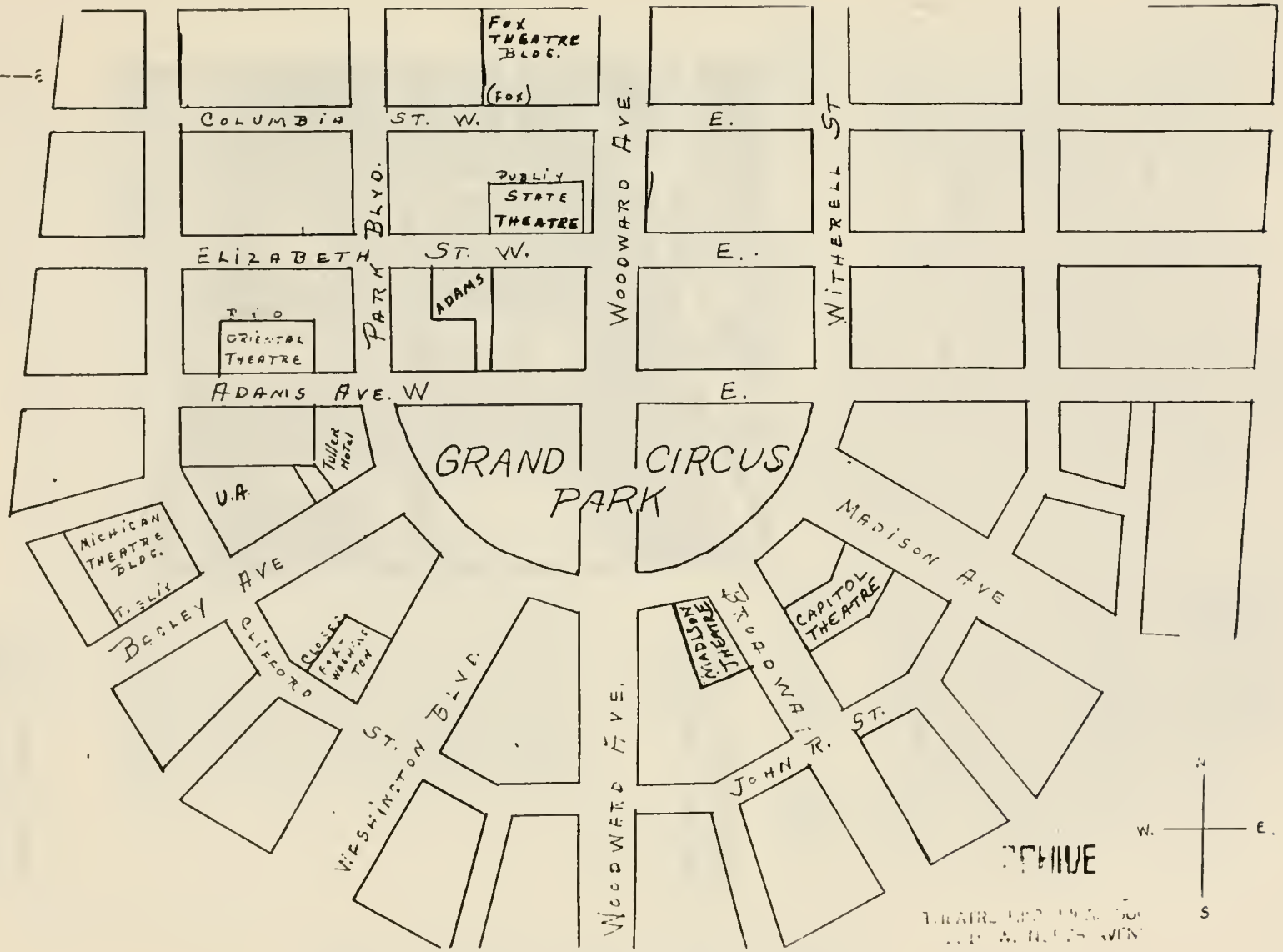
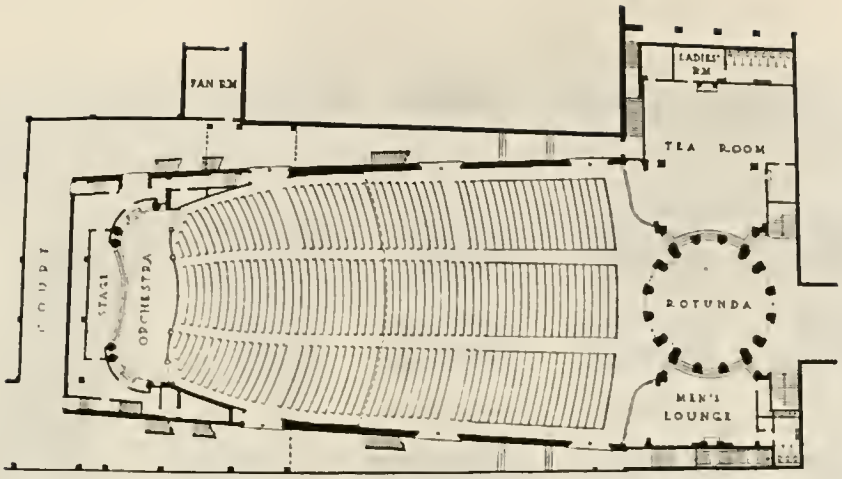



Fig. 35 Grand Circus Park, Detroit, Michigan




MAIN FLOOR PLAN
THE ALLEN THEATRE, CLEVELAND, OHIO
C. Howard Crane, Architect

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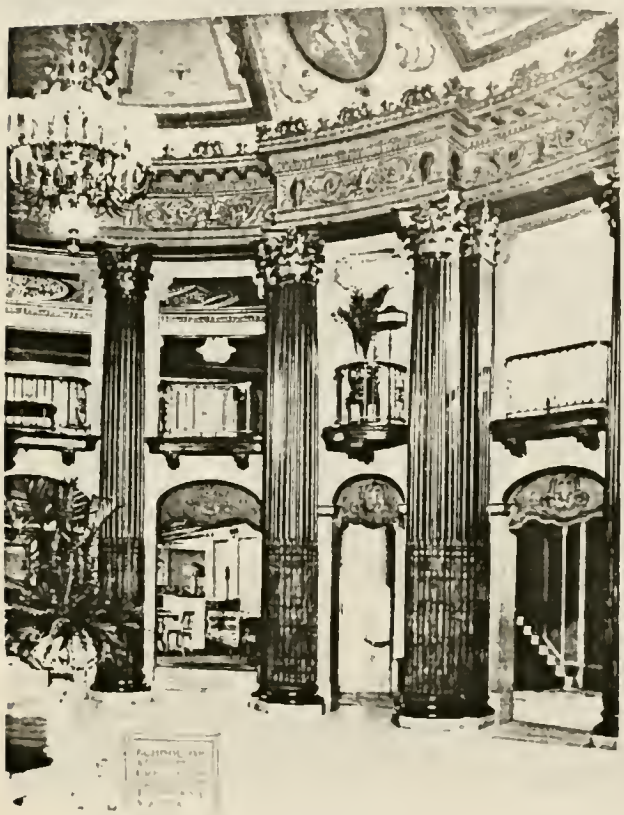
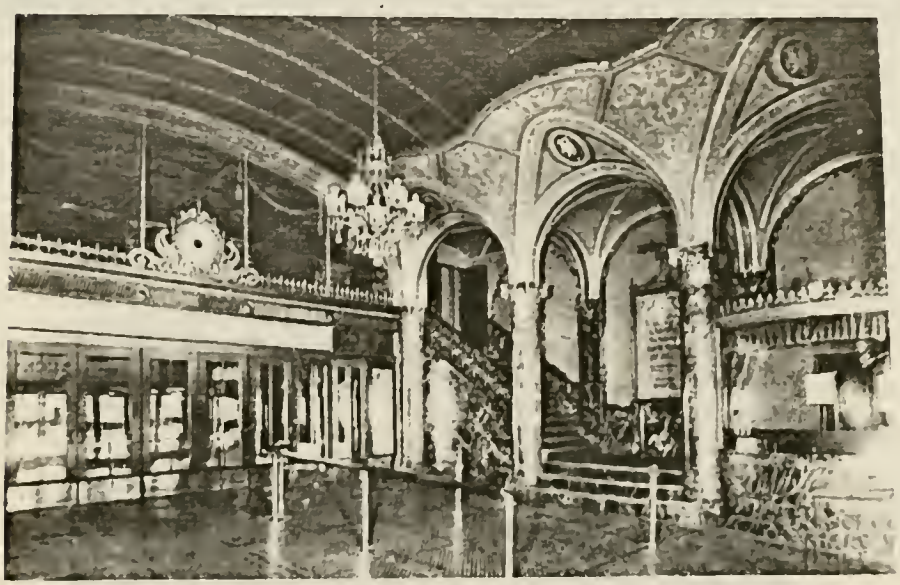
Fig. 36 Allen Theatre, Cleveland, floor plan (1921)



358

Fig. 37 Allen Theatre, grand rotunda (1921)

Fig. 38 Capitol Theatre, Detroit (1922) partial view of present day facade



*Lobby of The Capitol Theatre, Detroit, Mich.*
*C. Howard Crane, Architect*

Fig. 39 Capitol Theatre, outer lobby (1922)

*Detail of Capitol Theatre, Detroit, Mich.*
*C. Howard Crane, Architect.*

Fig. 40 Capitol Theatre, Detroit, grand foyer (1922)

Fig. 41 Capitol Theatre, partial view of present day grand stairway

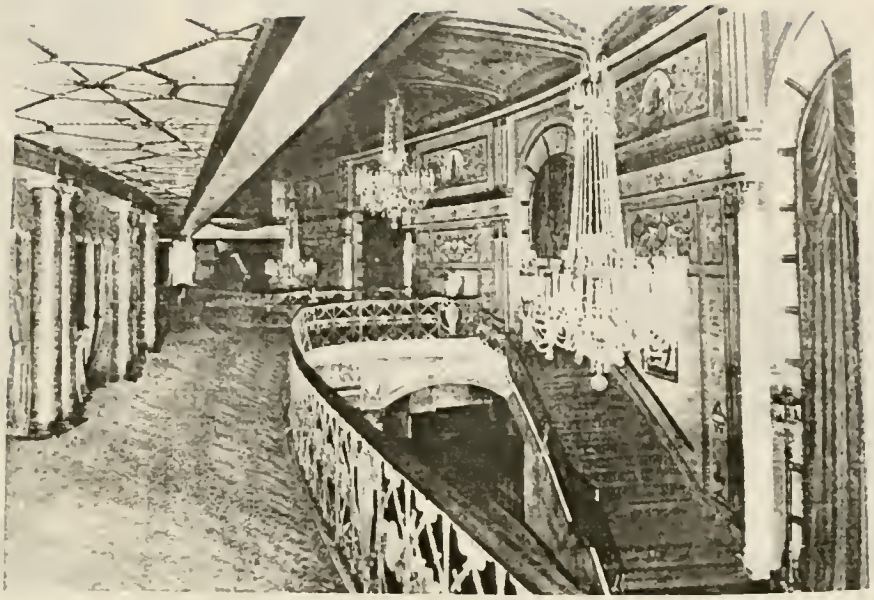


Fig. 42 Capitol Theatre, mezzanine foyer (1922)

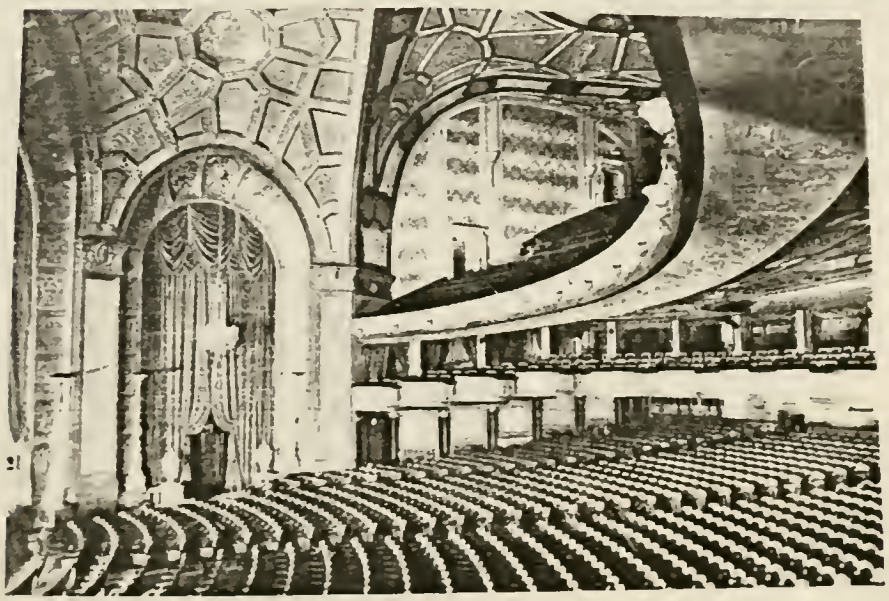


Fig. 43 Capitol Theatre, auditorium (1922)

Fig. 44 State Theatre, Detroit, mezzanine foyer (1925)

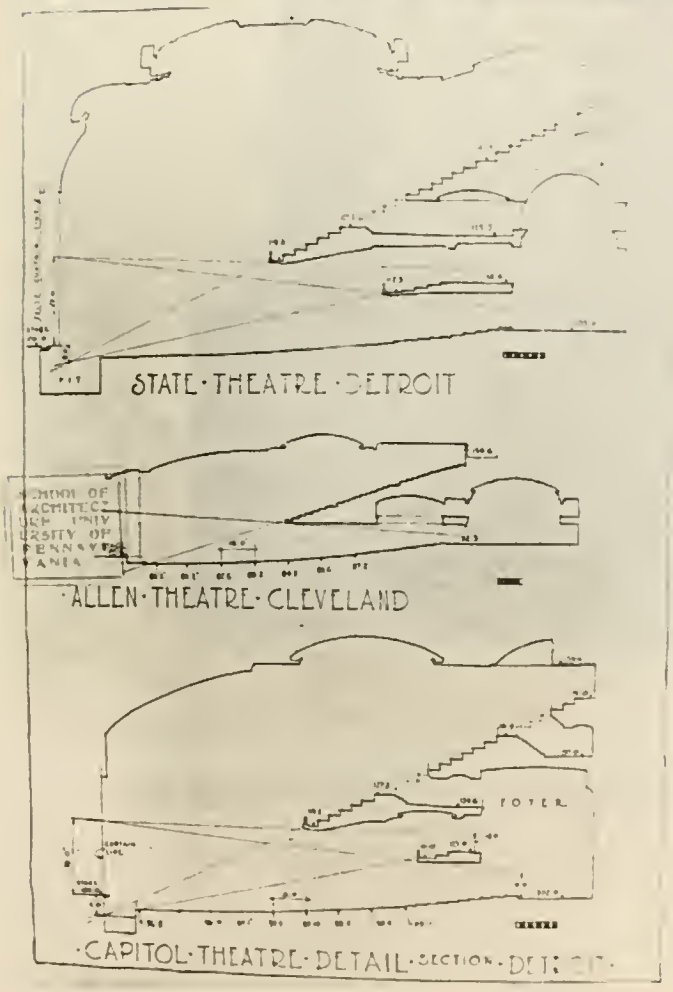



Fig. 45 Sectional diagram for the State, Allen and Capitol Theatres

Fig. 46 State Theatre and Palms Office Building, Detroit (1925)

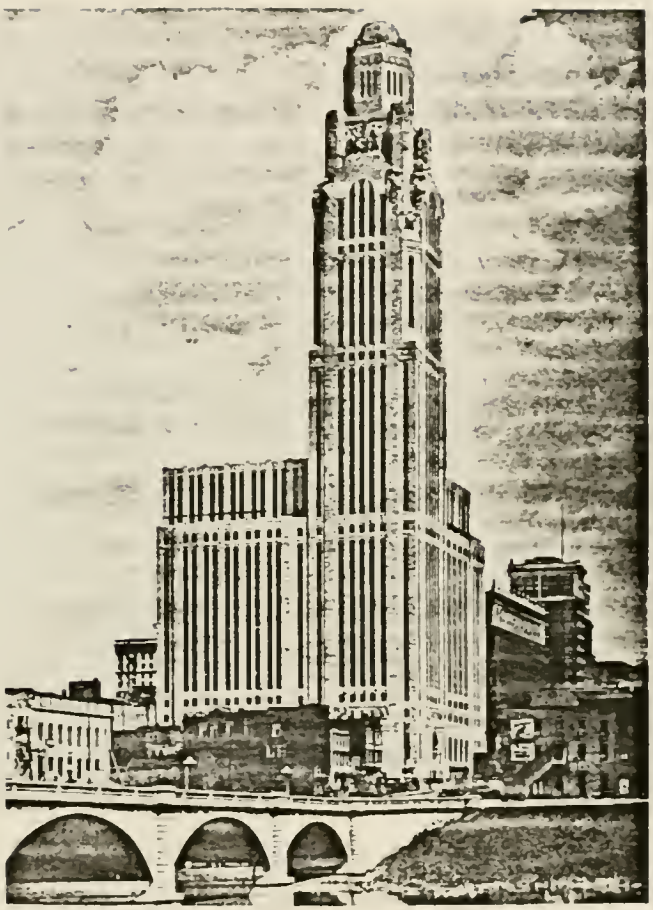
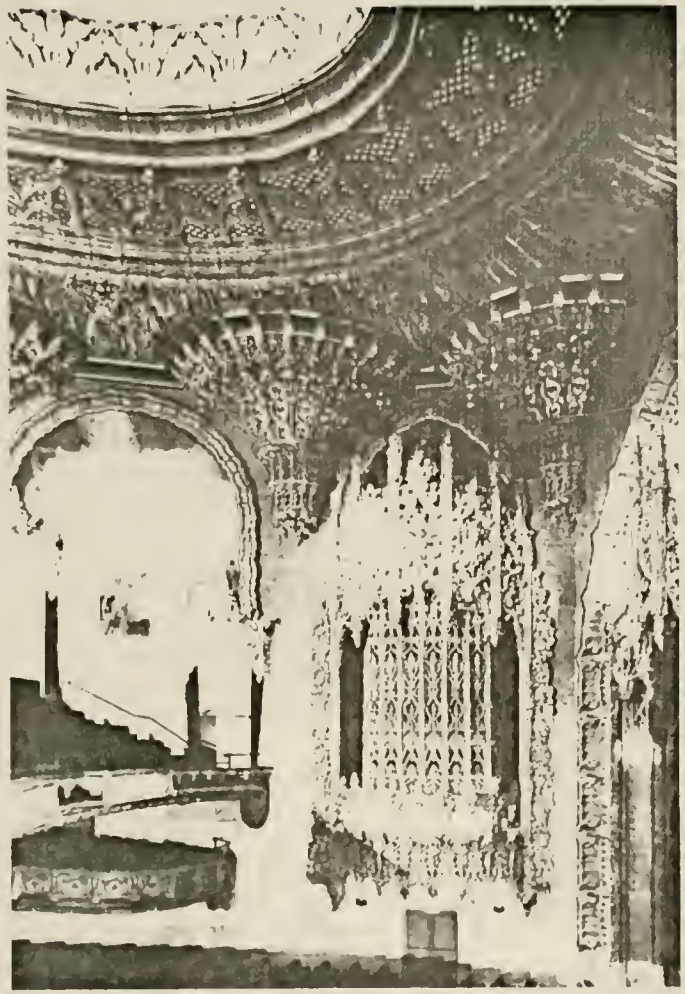
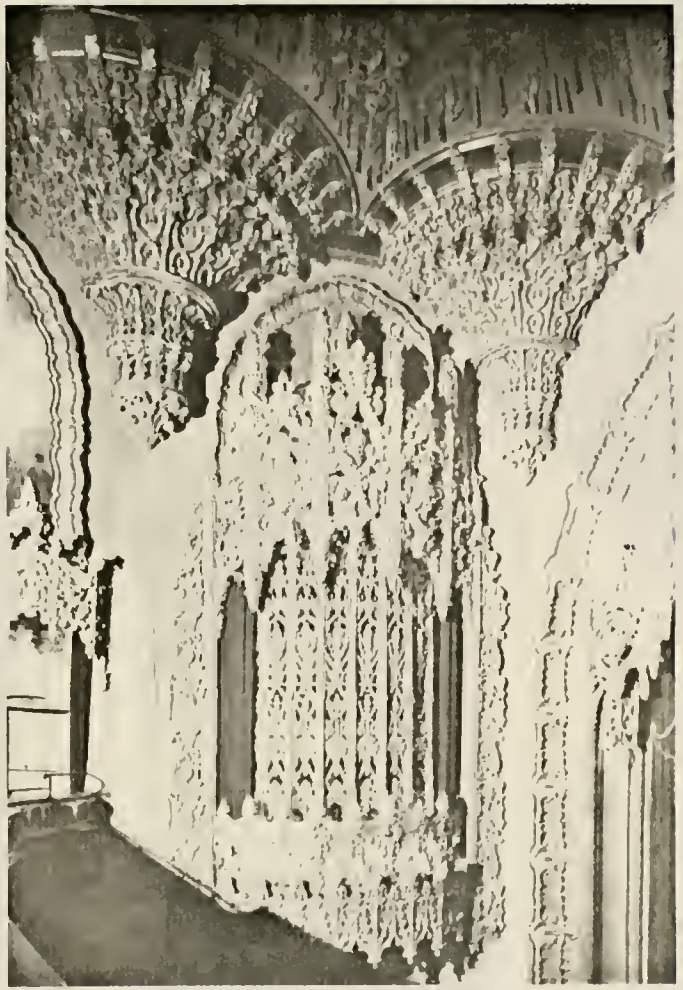


Fig. 47 American Insurance Union Citadel, Columbus (1926)

Fig. 48 United Artists Theatre, Los Angeles, auditorium mural portraying the motion picture industry, Mary Pickford in center (1927)





Figs. 49 and 50 United Artists Theatre, Los Angeles, views of auditorium (1927)

Fig. 51 United Artists, Los Angeles, view of present day auditorium

Fig. 52 United Artists, Los Angeles, partial view of present day grand foyer

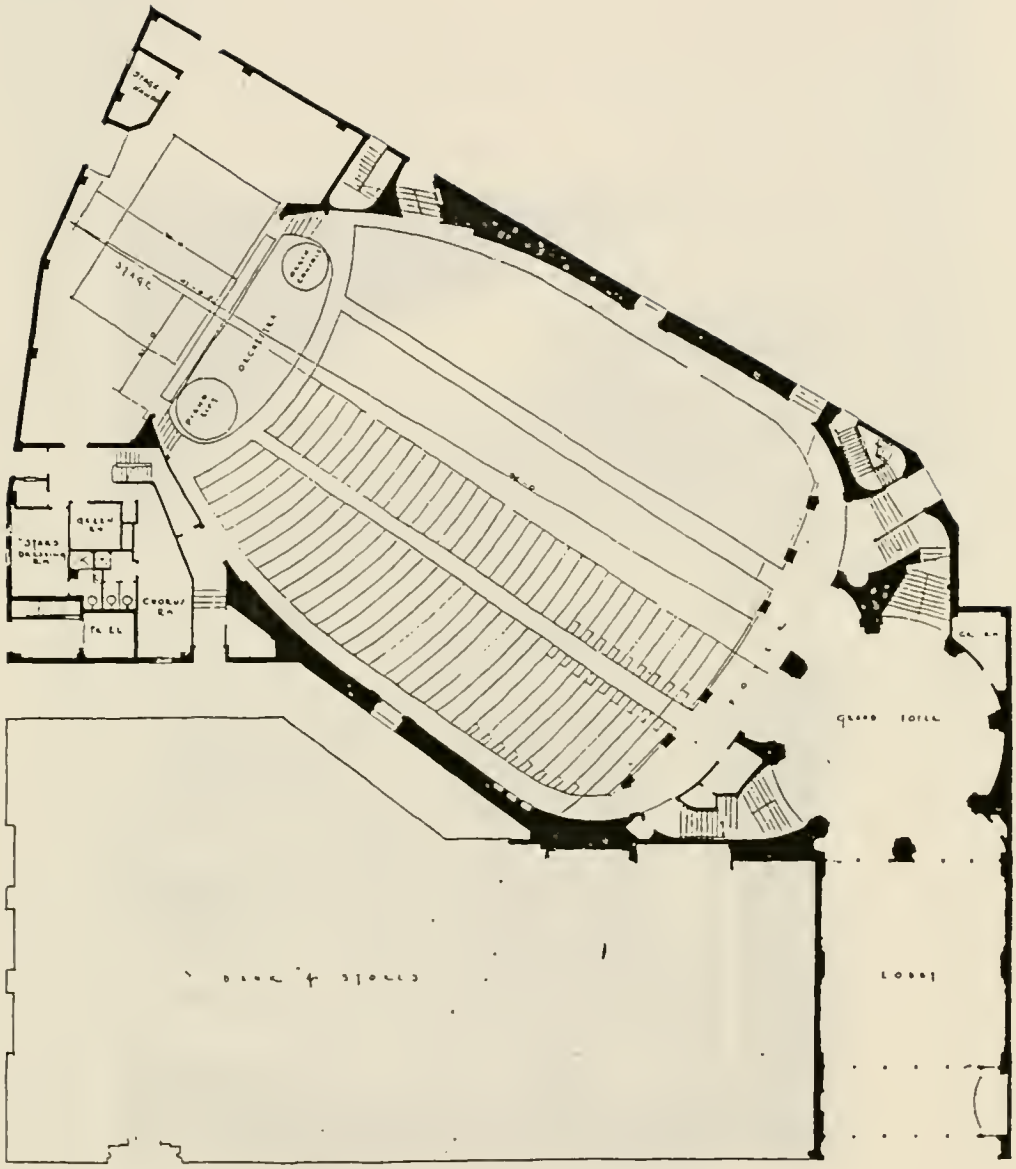
Fig. 53 United Artists, Los Angeles, grand foyer (1927)

Fig. 54 United Artists, Los Angeles, view of present day auditorium

Fig. 55 United Artists, Los Angeles (1927)

Fig. 56 Premiere of Mary Pickford film at the United Artists

Fig. 57 United Artists Theatre, Detroit (1928)



PLAN OF ORCHESTRA. 1242 SEATS

Fig. 58 United Artists Theatre, Detroit, floor plan and diagram of lot (1928)

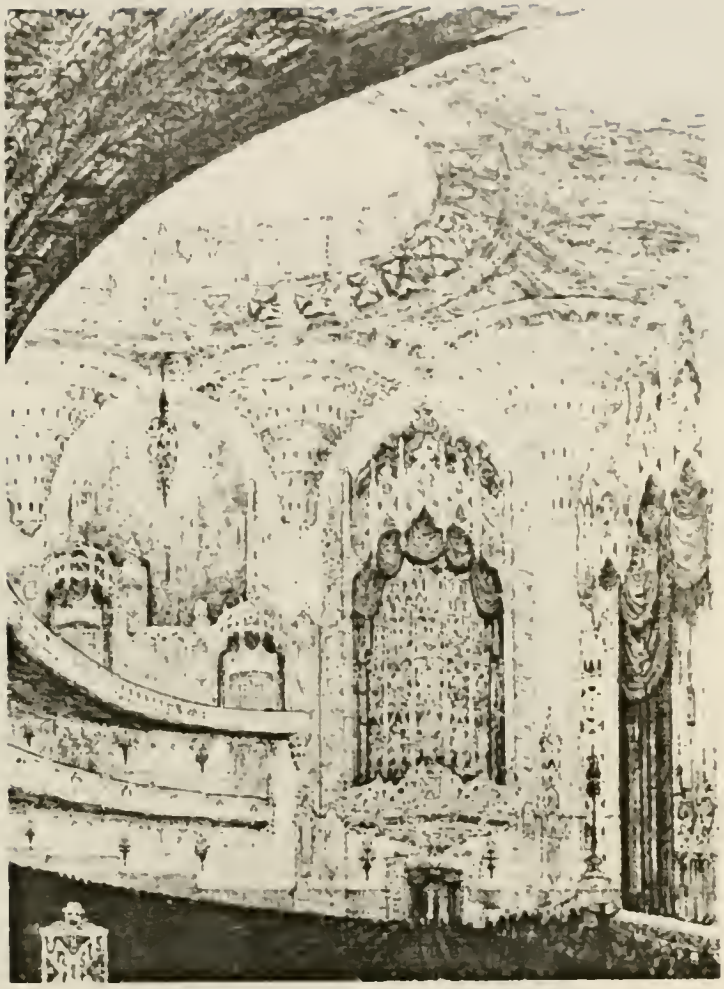


Fig. 59 United Artists, Detroit, auditorium (1928)

Fig. 60 United Artists Theatre, Chicago, auditorium (1928)

Fig. 61 United Artists, Chicago (1928) former Apollo Theatre of 1921

Fig. 62 Sectional diagram for the Brooklyn, Detroit, Philadelphia, St. Louis Fox Theatres

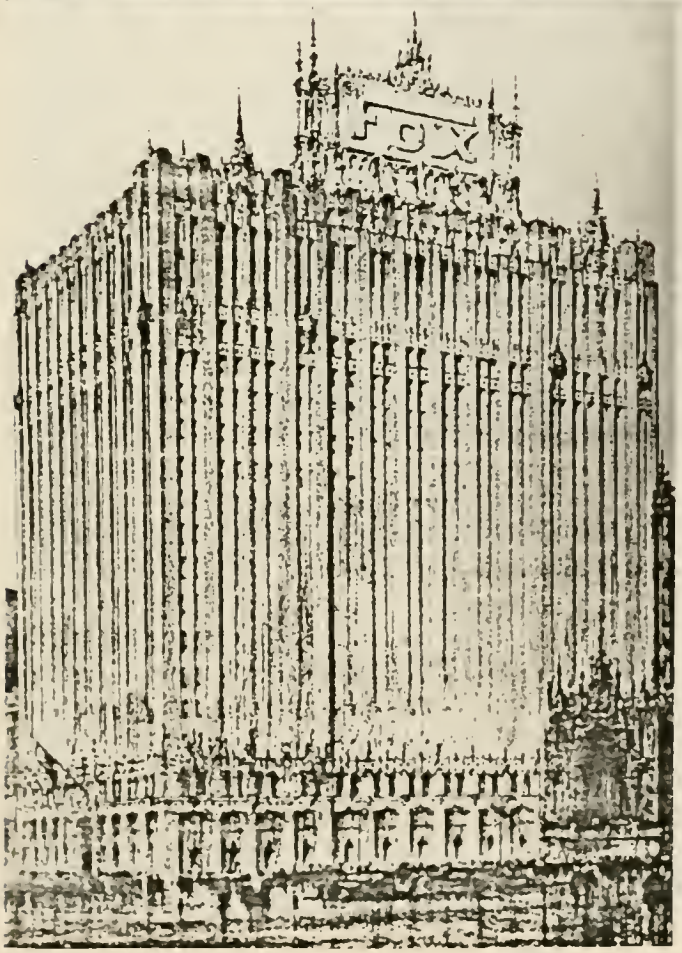



Fig. 63 Proposed facade for the Philadelphia Fox

Fig. 64 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn (1928)

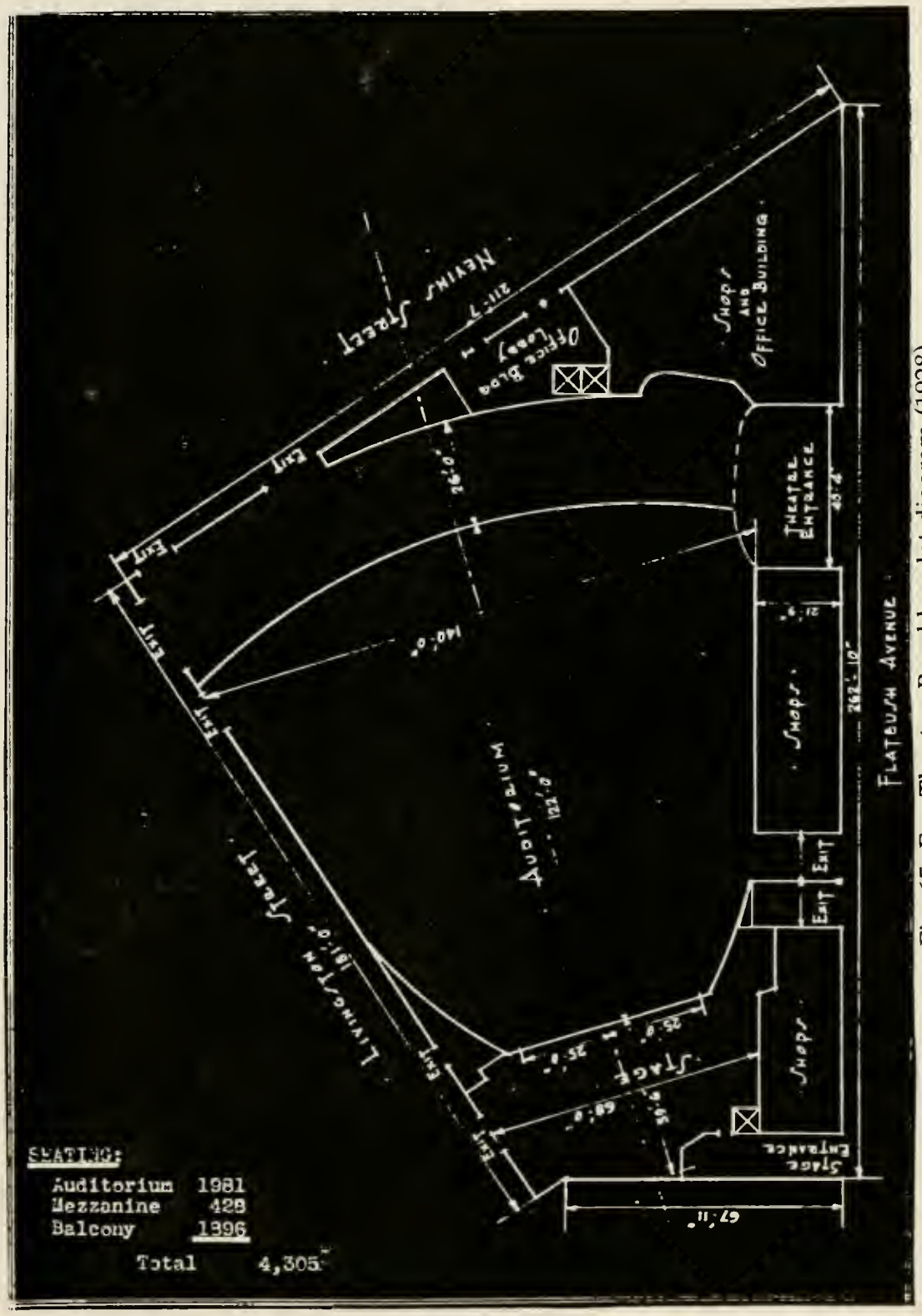


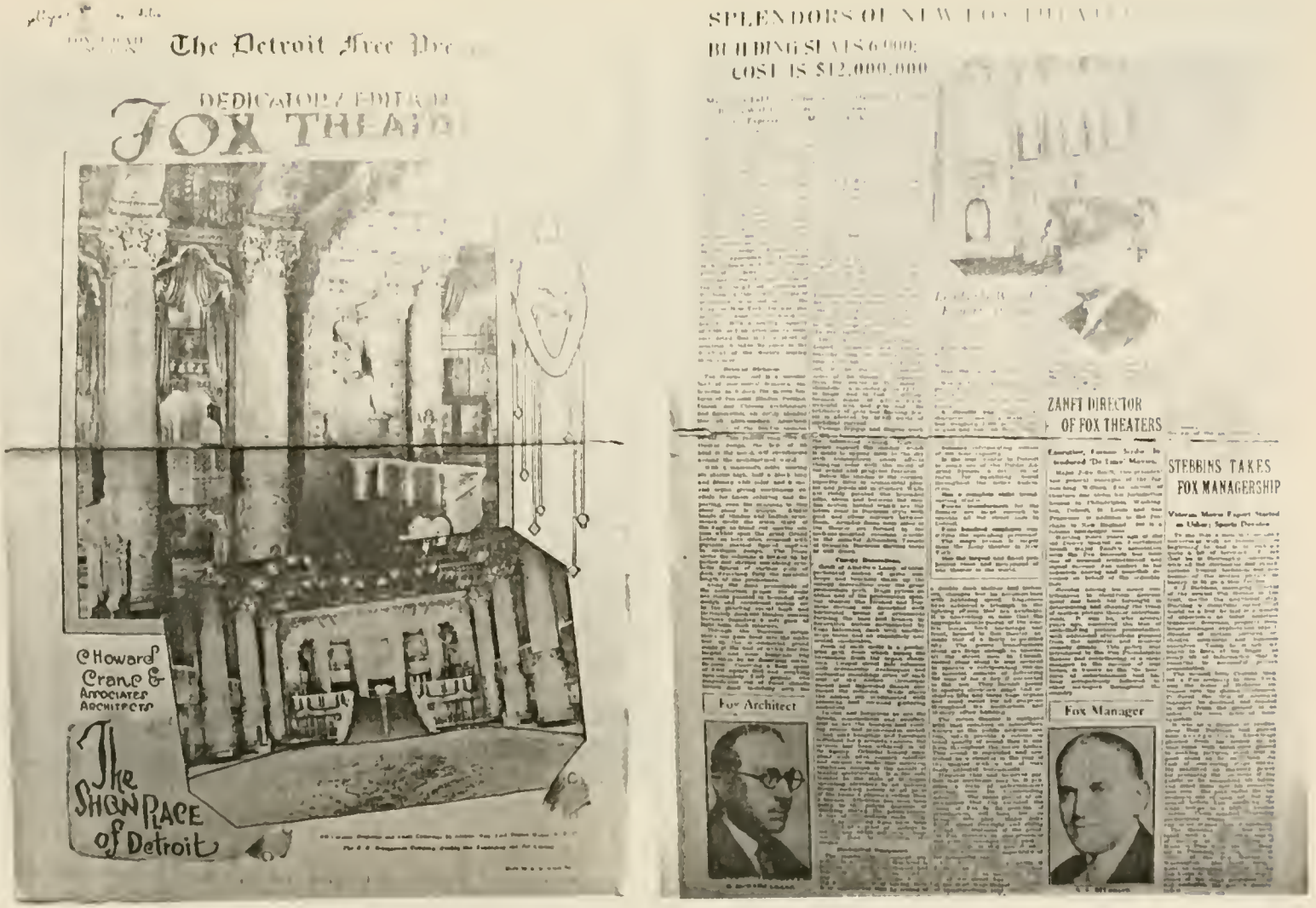

Fig. 65 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, lot diagram (1928)

Fig. 66 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, auditorium (1928)

Fig. 67 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, auditorium

Fig. 68 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, grand foyer

Fig. 69 Fox Theatre, Detroit (1928)




Figs. 70 and 71 Detroit Free Press dedicatory issue for the opening of Detroit's Fox Theatre (1928)

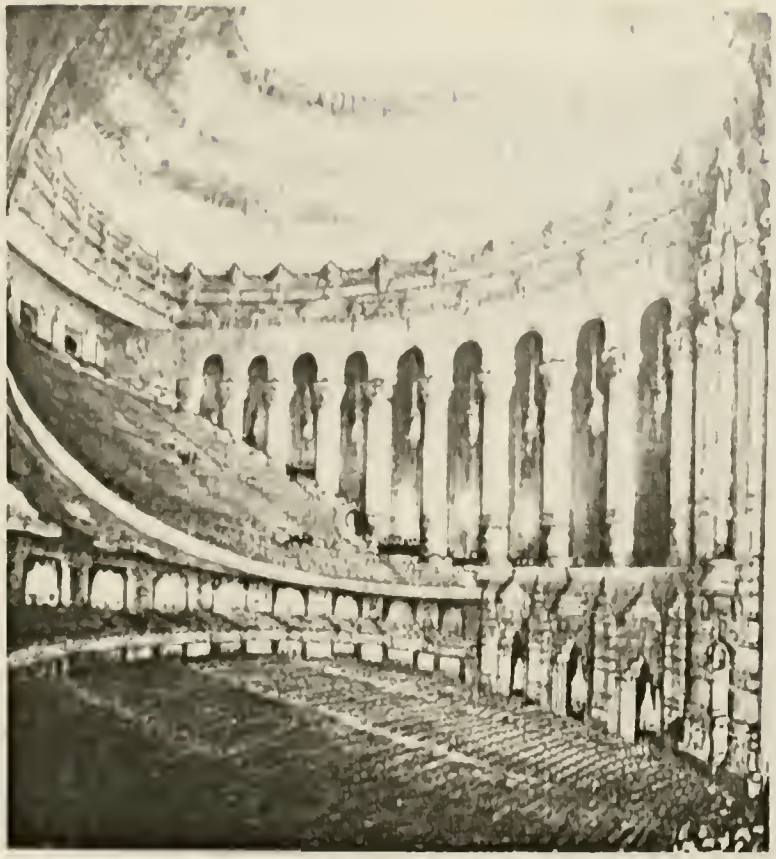


Fig. 72 Fox Theatre, Detroit, auditorium (1928)

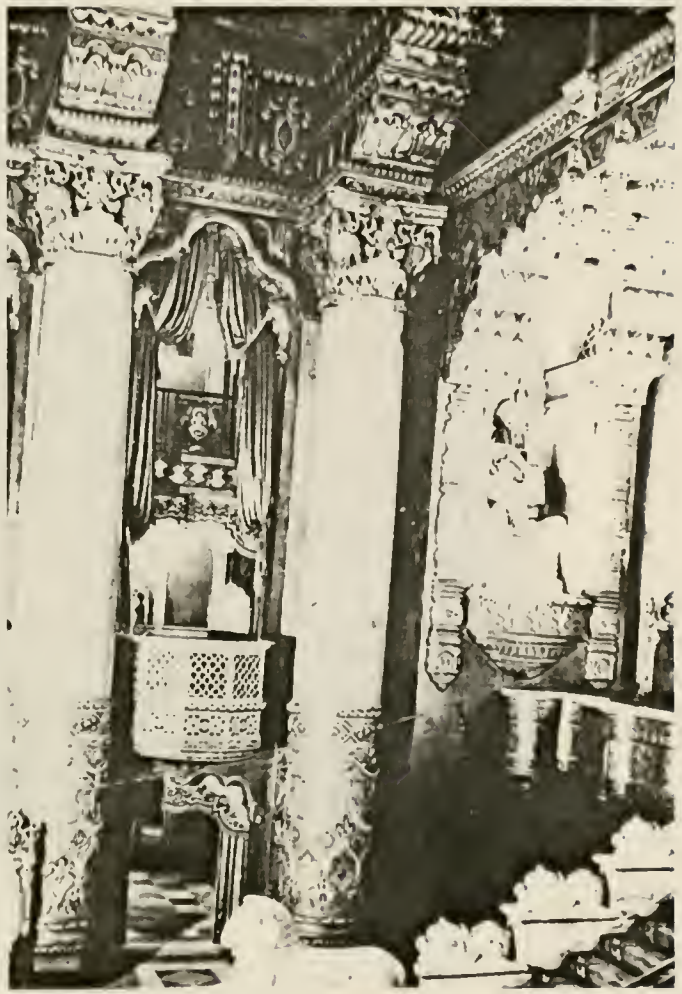


Fig. 73 Fox Theatre, Detroit, grand foyer (1928)

Fig. 74 Lion guarding the grand stairway, restored lobby of the Fox Theatre, St. Louis (twin to the Fox Theatre, Detroit)

Fig. 75 Elliptical stairway, Fox Theatre, St. Louis

Fig. 76 Decorative detail, Fox Theatre, St. Louis

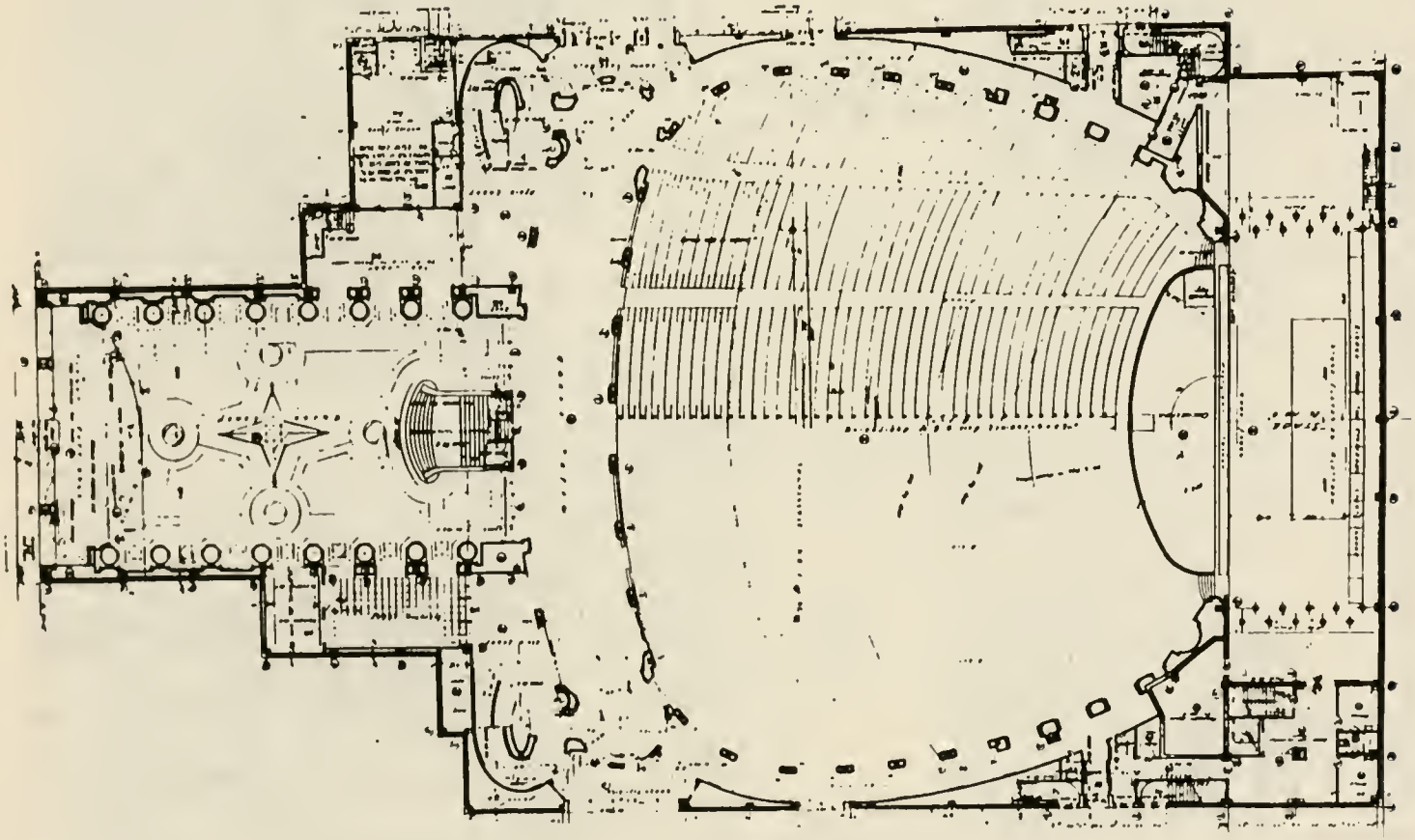


Fig. 77 Fox Theatre, St. Louis, floor plan

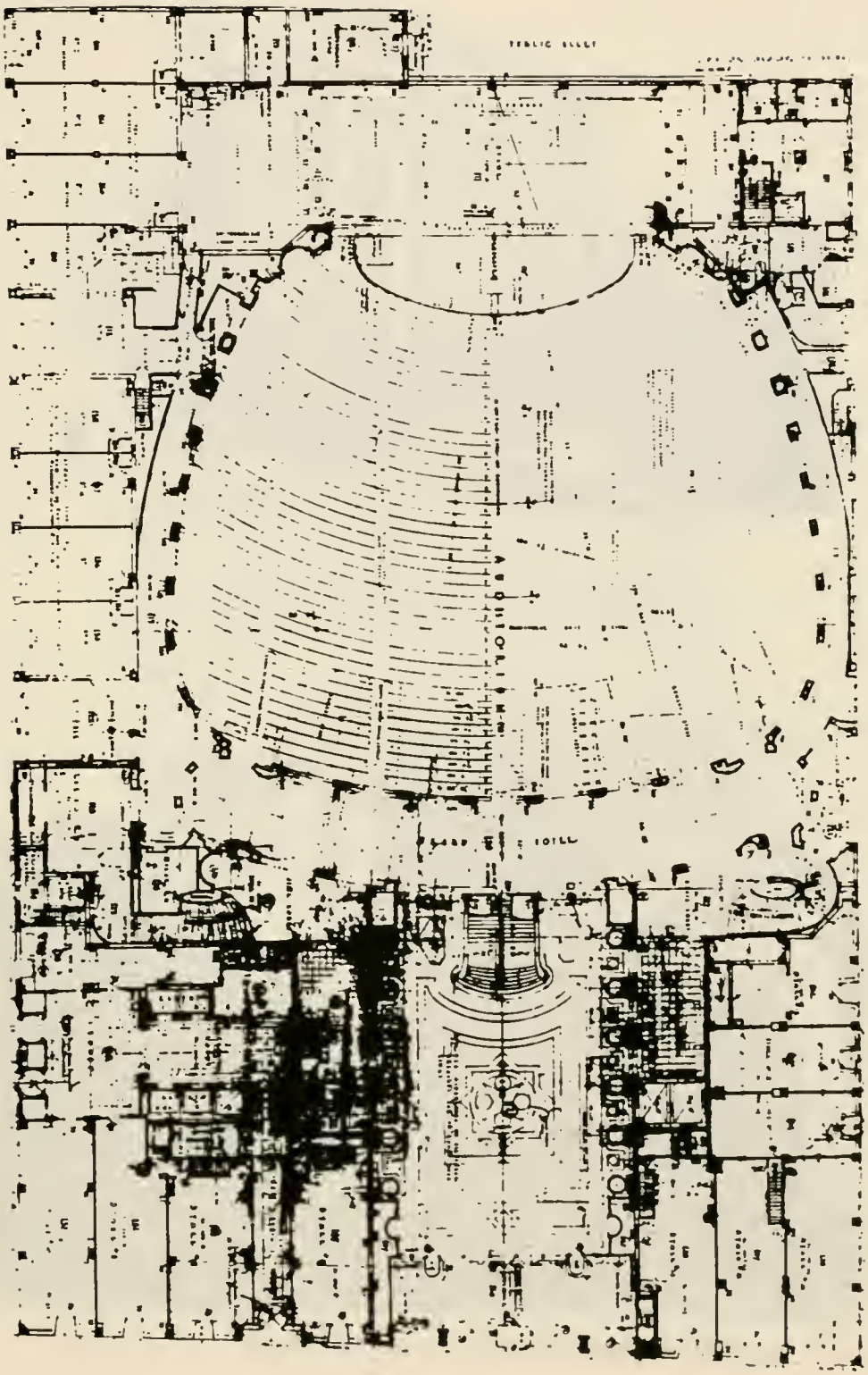


Fig. 78 Fox Theatre, Detroit, floor plan

*Fox Theatre, Detroit, Michigan*

Fig. 79 Fox Theatre, Detroit (1928)

Fig. 80 Fox Theatre, St. Louis (1929) present day facade

Fig. 81 Fox Theatre, St. Louis (1929) present day facade

## APPENDIX ONE

### A Working List of Crane's Theater Commissions

The following list consists of theater commissions received by the office of C. Howard Crane, as recorded in Crane's project inventory book from the Crane archives collection, which is in the possession of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, Michigan. Omitted from the list are project numbers of commissions in the inventory book which were not for theaters. All information that was given in the inventory book about each theater is listed below. This information consisted of an assigned project number, and in some instances the name of the client and the theater's location. No reference to dates were given. The information listed below in parentheses was obtained from Andrew Craig Morrison, architect, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, based upon his own ongoing research.

| Job No. | Commission |
|---|---|
| #2 | Woodward Avenue Theatre |
| #21 | Majestic Theatre |
| #29 | Empress Theatre |
| #37 | Casino Theatre |
| #46 | Robinson Theatre |
| #50 | Columbia Theatre |
| #54 | Mack Ave. Theatre |
| #59 | Klatt Theatre |
| #61 | National Theatre |
| #73 | Gratiot Ave. Theatre |
| #75 | Lynch Theatre |
| #79 | Ritter Theatre |
| #82 | Butterfly Theatre |
| #85 | Garden Theatre |
| #87 | Schneider Theatre |
| #89 | Hippodrome Theatre |
| #94 | Comique Theatre |
| #96 | Cary Duplex |
| #99 | Grand Rapids Theatre |
| #103 | New York Theatre |
| #105 | Brockius Theatre, Canton, Ohio |
| #108 | Empire Theatre |
| #111 | Lichtig Theatre |
| #115 | Liberty Theatre |
| #116 | Lincoln Theatre |
| #123 | Idlehour Theatre |
| #127 | Kline Theatre |
| #128 | Palace Theatre |
| #130 | Regent Theatre |
| #141 | Regent Theatre, Buffalo |
| #146 | Empire Theatre |
| #149 | Marks Main St. Palace Theatre |
| #150 | Ottawa Theatre |
| #151 | Strand Theatre, Detroit |
| #152 | Strand Theatre, Syracuse |
| #168 | Francais Theatre, Montreal |
| #169 | Vaudette Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI |
| #171 | Alhambra Theatre |
| #175 | Majestic Theatre, (Woodward & Willis) |
| #181 | Washington Theatre |
| #182 | Chatham Theatre |
| #184 | Wyandotte Theatre |
| #187 | Strand Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI |
| #188 | Strand Theatre, Grand River, Scherer |
| #190 | Saginaw Hippodrome Theatre |
| #194 | Madison Theatre |
| #198 | Globe Theatre |
| #200 | Princess Theatre, Toronto |
| #202 | Muskegon Theatre, (Western Ave. bet. 1st & 2nd) |
| #204 | Oklahoma Theatre |

#205 Majestic alterations, Grand Rapids, MI
#207 New Saginaw Theatre
#209 Norbro Theatre
#211 Drury Lane Theatre
#216 Saginaw Palace Theatre,(Genessee Ave. bet. Baum Ave & Franklin)
#217 Classic Theatre
#218 Rosebud Theatre
#221 Bijou Theatre alterations
#223 Ferry Field Theatre
#227 Atheneum, Jackson, MI, (remodeling), Majestic Theatre
#228 Fuller Theatre,(Kalamazoo, MI)
#230 Russell Theatre, (Russel near Frederick, Detroit)
#231 Circle Theatre, Indiana
#233 Rialto Theatre, #1
#241 Rialto Theatre, #2, Detroit, (north side of Gratiot)
#242 Colonial Theatre
#247 Oakland Theatre, Pontiac, MI
#248 Fisher Amusement Room
#250 Chicago Grove Theatre
#259 Fine Arts Theatre
#265 Beaux Arts Theatre, Adams
#268 Catharine Theatre
#273 Iris Theatre
#275 Majestic Theatre, Muskegon, MI
#276 Ferndale Theatre
#279 Glendale Theatre
#285 Rialto, Muskegon
#288 Tinny Theatre
#289 Allen Theatre, Toronto
#290 Youngstown Theatre
#298 Plymouth, theatre & dance hall for Katie E. Allen
#302 Lancaster Theatre
#305 Ferndale Theatre
#306 Alhambra, alterations
#308 Lyric Theatre, Pittsburg
#315 Alvin Theatre
#320 Edmonton Theatre
#321 Star Theatre, Chicago
#326 Hippodrome Theatre, Akron, Ohio
#328 Arcadia Theatre
#329 Koppin Theatre
#335 Wonderland Theatre, marquise
#336 Allen Theatre, London, Ont.
#340 Kramer Theatre
#341 Allen Theatre, Winnipeg
#342 Allen Theatre, St. Clair
#343 Allen Theatre, London #2
#344 Orchestra Hall
#345 Empire Theatre, Toled
#347 Grand Rapids, Nichols Theatre
#349 Nederlander Theatre

#350 Peoria Theatre
#351 Beach, Allen Theatre
#352 Vancouver, Allen Theatre
#353 College, Allen Theatre
#354 Victory Theatre
#355 Anthony G. Theatre
#356 Miles Detroit Opera House
#357 Oakman Theatre
#360 Kalamazoo Theatre
#361 Victory Theatre, Slopski
#362 Halifax, Allen Theatre
#365 James Theatre, Columbus, Ohio
#366 Allen Theatre, Cleveland
#368 Allen Theatre, Detroit
#369 Washington Theatre, marquise
#374 Montreal Theatre
#375 Fox Theatre, Springfield, Mass
#382 Riviera Theatre, Ross G.R.R.
#383 New Halifax Theatre #2
#386 Shouks Theatre
#388 Dudley Theatre
#389 Strand, alterations
#393 Arcade Theatre, Akron, Ohio
#399 James Theatre, alterations, Columbus, Ohio
#400 Kunsky theater, Mack Ave., Detroit
#401 Music Box Theatre, N.Y.C.
#402 Zakoor Theatre, Chatham
#403 Comique, alterations
#404 Asher's Theatre, Chicago
#405 Asher's Roosevelt Theatre, Chicago
#408 Fort Wayne, Majestic Theatre
#410 Selwyn Twin Theatres, Chicago
#411 Evansville Theatre, Chadwick
#413 Macomb Theatre, Mt. Clemens, MI
#414 Harry S. Koppin Theatre, Catherine St.
#415 Majestic Theatre, alterations
#416 DeLuxe Theatre, alterations
#417 Kunsky Theatre, Capitol
#422 Columbia Theatre seating plan
#427 Omaha, Nebraska, World Theatre
#433 Shubert Theatre Detroit, alterations
#434 Cadillac Theatre, alterations
#436 Kunsky, Royal Theatre, alterations
#439 Windsor, Allen Theatre, stage alterations
#441 Shubert Theatre, Michigan, alterations
#449 Capitol Theatre, Jackson, MI
#456 Rex Theatre, Jackson, MI
#457 Arcadia, alterations, Detroit
#460 Lyric Theatre, Ann Arbor, MI
#461 Family Theatre, (Campus Martius)
#464 Gladmer Theatre, Lansing, MI

#467 Cosmos Theatre, Washington DC
#477 Nederlander, Monroe St. Theatre
#480 Orpheum Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI
#517 State Theatre, Detroit, Kunsky
#518 Playhouse, Bonstelle & Sloman
#519 Lyric Theatre, Davis, Pittsburgh, 5th Ave.
#521 Grand Theatre, Pittsburgh
#527 John Biggio & Sons, Capital Threatre, Steubenville, Ohio
#529 (James) Eastern Theatre, Columbus, Ohio (alterations)
#534 M.S. Koppin, Republic Theatre
#549 Max Allen Theatre, Fort Street (Lincoln Park, MI)
#553 Tivola Theatre , (Highland Park, MI)
#557 Allen Theatre, Plymouth, MI
#559 Nederlander Theatre & Garage, 6 Mile & Woodward
#562 Northville Theatre
#564 Youngstown, Ohio Theatre, Schaffer & Trunk
#566 Capitol Theatre, roof garden
#573 William Klatt Theatre, (Woodward & Blvd.)
#575 Woodlawn Theatre, Chicago
#577 Wetsman Theatre, Grand River & Maplewood
#583 H.S. Koppin Theatre, Chalmers & Mack
#585 Fox Theatre, St. Louis
#586 Embassy Theatre, Geo. Koppin, 2008 Woodward Ave., Detroit
#590 Fox Theatre, Detroit
#591 United Artists Theatre, Detroit
#592 H.S. Koppin Theatre, Flint, MI
#593 United Artists Theatre, Los Angeles
#595 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn
#598 Pontiac, MI, Oakland Theatre, Butterfield
#599 W. James, Columbus, Ohio, New Theatre (W. Broad & Ogden)
#600 Fox Theatre, Philadelphia
#601 United Artists Theatre, New York City, Globe Theatre
#602 Wm. Klatt, Woodward & Englewood theatre and hotel
#604 Schlossman, Muskegon, MI (Regent, alterations)
#606 United Artists Theatre, Kansas City, Alterations
#614 Yaarab Temple, Fox Theatre, Atlanta, GA. (Mayre, Alger, Vinour and Assoc.)
#626 United Artists Theatre, Appollo Theatre, Remodel
#640 Miniger, Toledo, Theatre & Offices
#645 Michigan Theatre, Muskegon, MI
#664 St. Paul, Minnesota, Auditorium
#670 Philadelphia Opera House
#688 Jonesville Theatre
#689 Senate Theatre
#692 Detroit Opera House, R.E. Olds
#719 Center Theatre
#737 Strand Theatre, Tecumseh, MI
#744 President Theatre
#750 Roosevelt Theatre
#759 Family Theatre
#760 9217 Grand River Theatre, Detroit

#764 Gladmer Theatre, Lansing, MI, Butterfield
#765 Garden Theatre, Flint, MI, Butterfield
#766 Bijou Theatre, Battle Creek, MI
#767 Theatre, North Lansing, MI, Butterfield
#768 Alhambra Theatre
#771 Nortown Theatre, Flint, MI
#775 Punch & Judy Theatre, (Grosse Pointe Farms, MI)
#777 E. Lansing Theatre, Butterfield
#778 Pontiac, MI, Oakland Theatre
#779 Pontiac, MI, State Theatre
#783 Lyric Theatre, Traverse City, MI
#786 Strand Theatre, Holland, MI
#789 Traverse City, MI, theatre and bowling alley
#792 Theatre at Houghton Lake, MI, Olsen
#797 Alhambra Theatre, Hillsdale, MI
#800 State Theatre, Ann Arbor, MI, Butterfield
#803 Michigan, Battle Creek, MI, Butterfield
#808 Rouge Theatre, Associated Theatres
#811 Wuerth Theatre, Ypsilanti, MI
#820 Martha Washington Theatre, Ypsilanti, MI
#853 Dawn Theatre, Hillsdale, MI, Butterfield
#860 Sloan, Wyandotte Theatre, Twin
#861 Sloan, Northwestern & 8 Mile, Detroit
#863 Clawson Theatre, Redford, MI
#883 Regent Theatre, Muskegon, MI
#885 Sloan, Grosse Pointe Theatre
#886 Desmond Theatre, Port Huron, MI
#892 Auburn Heights Theatre
#899 Del-The Theatre
#902 Minneapolis Theatre, Associated Theatres
#903 Caldwell Theatre, St. Joseph, MI
#906 Lakeview Theatre
#909 Rialto Theatre, Wyandotte, MI
#911 Lancaster Theatre, Associated Theatres
#914 Family Theatre, Port Huron, MI
#918 Holly Theatre
#919 Majestic Theatre, Port Huron, MI
#925 Desmond Theatre, Port Huron, MI
#926 Eastern Theatre, Columbus, Ohio
#931 Grande Theatre, Associated Theatres
#932 Maltz Theatre, Alpena, MI
#933 Palace Theatre, Flint, MI
#936 Gaylord Theatre, Olson Bros.
#938 Park Theatre, Kalamazoo, MI
#942 Regent Theatre, Bay City, MI
#945 Franklin Theatre, Saginaw, MI
#950 Ready Theatre, Niles, MI
#952 Riviera Theatre, Niles, MI
#953 Ionia Theatre, Ionia, MI
#954 Michigan Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI
#955 Gaylord Theatre, Olsen Bros.

| | |
|---|---|
| #957 | Holland Theatre, Holland, MI |
| #958 | Liberty Theatre, Benton Harbor, MI |
| #959 | State Theatre, East Lansing, MI |
| #960 | State Theatre, Traverse City, MI |
| #961 | Nortown Theatre, Lansing, MI |
| #966 | Oxford Theatre, Oxford, MI |
| #967 | Globe Theatre |
| #970 | Regent Theatre, Bay City, MI |
| #972 | Neth Theatre, Columbus, Ohio |
| #973 | Capitol Theatre, Jackson, MI |
| #983 | Family Theatre, Detroit |
| #990 | Rivola Theatre |
| #991 | Lansing Theatre, Butterfield |
| #994 | Temple Thatre, Saginaw, MI |
| #995 | Michigan Theatre, Ann Arbor, MI |
| #1008 | Capitol Theatre, Owosso, MI |
| #1009 | Strand Theatre, Sturgis, MI |
| #1012 | Regent Theatre, Bay City, MI |
| #1014 | Michigan Theatre, Muskegon, MI |
| #1015 | Grand Theatre, Grand Haven, MI |
| #1018 | Strand Theatre, Muskegon Hts., MI |
| #1019 | Regent Theatre, Muskegon, MI |
| #1020 | State Theatre, East Lansing, MI |
| #1028 | Wolverine Theatre, Saginaw, MI |
| #1029 | Oakland Theatre, Pontiac, MI |
| #1034 | Lyric Theatre, Cadillac, MI |
| #1039 | Esquire Theatre |
| #1050 | Ford Auditorium |
| #1071 | Rouge Theatre |
| #1085 | Michigan Theatre, Jackson, MI |
| #1106 | Desmond Theatre |
| #1127 | Croswell Theatre, Adrian, MI |
| #1133 | Paramount Theatre, Detroit |
| #1141 | Capitol Theatre, Flint, MI |
| #1142 | Campus Theatre, Ann Arbor, MI |
| #1178 | Michigan Theatre, Muskegon, MI |
| #1184 | Majestic Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI |
| #1197 | Circle Theatre |
| #2605 | Desmond Theatre (Huron) Port Huron, MI |
| #2611 | Nederlander Theatre |
| #2642 | Campus Theatre, Kalamazoo, MI |
| #2652 | Grand Rapids Theatre, Butterfield |

## APPENDIX TWO

Firms Under the Patronage of C. Howard Crane & Associates

The following illustrations of advertisements represent a partial record of contractors and suppliers used by C. Howard Crane & Associates. These were taken from Crane's 1929 catalog of *Reproductions of Work Designed and Executed thru The Offices of C. Howard Crane Architect, Elmer George Kiehler, Ben A. Dore Associates,* from the C. Howard Crane Archives, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, Michigan.

THE success of the buildings illustrated in this brochure is substantially due to the combined efforts, skill and co-operation of the firms represented on the following pages.

C. HOWARD CRANE & ASSOCIATES
*Architects*

SPENCER HORIZONTAL VACUUM CLEANER AND SEPARATOR

## SPENCER Central Cleaning Systems

are installed in a very large number of the finest theatre buildings throughout the country. Among the work of Architect C. Howard Crane may be mentioned the following:

STATE THEATRE, Detroit
JAMES THEATRE, Columbus
BONSTELLE PLAYHOUSE, Detroit
SELWYN-HARRIS THEATRE, Chicago
ADAMS THEATRE, Detroit
CAPITOL THEATRE, Detroit
ALLEN THEATRE, Cleveland

There is a SPENCER suitable for any size building large or small, and which gives the same advantages of absolute cleanliness at the lowest operating cost. Send for complete details

THE SPENCER TURBINE COMPANY
HARTFORD, CONN.

SELWYN THEATRE [illegible]
HOWARD GRANT [illegible]

NO one knows so well as the architect the [illegible] pinched [illegible] They always [illegible] to [illegible] These qualities [illegible] [illegible] identified with the [illegible] Matthews

MATTHEWS BROTHERS MANUFACTURING COMPANY
[illegible]
MILWAUKEE WIS

*The American Insurance Union Citadel*

stands, a realization of the dreams of its projectors, its architect and its builders—a monument to their ability and enterprise for a century to come.

# Northwestern Terra Cotta

is proud of its part—the making and setting of the entire facing of this epochal edifice—proud of the massive modeled ornament, the surface texture, the ceramic finish—that make the Citadel one of the country's outstanding structures.

THE NORTHWESTERN TERRA COTTA COMPANY

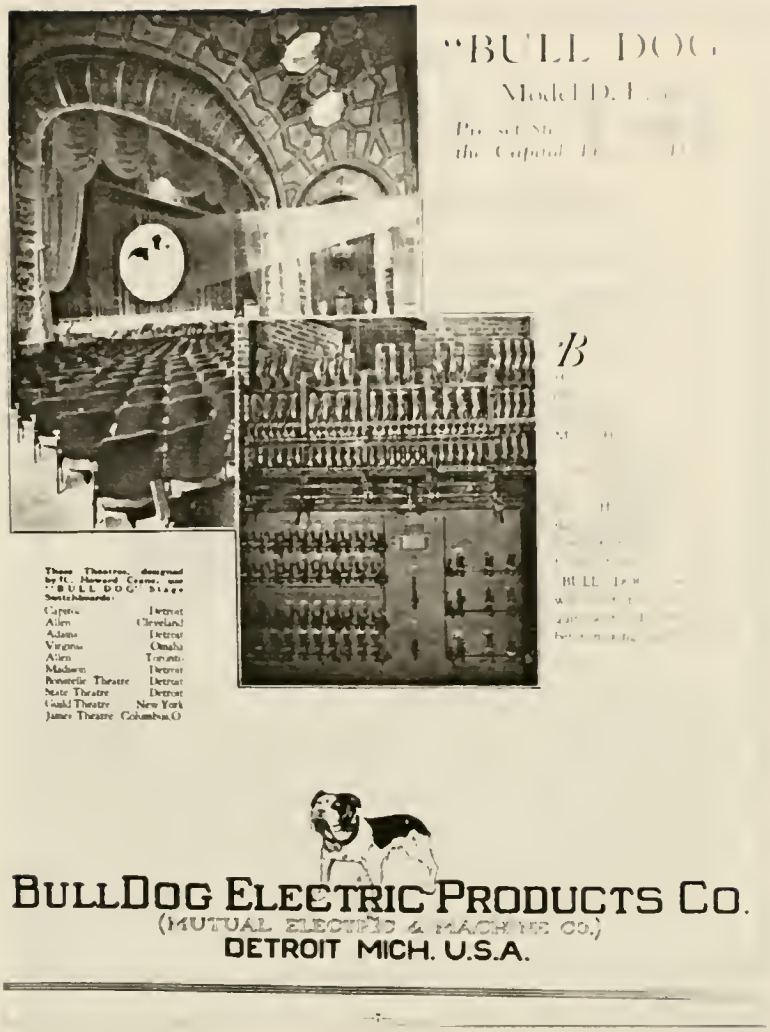
DENVER CHICAGO ST. LOUIS

*A Four Color Harmony of Especial Interest*

TOMPKINS-KIEL MARBLE COMPANY

505 FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK CITY

CHICAGO SAN FRANCISCO


"BULL DOG
Model D.
These Theatres, designed by H. Howard Crane, use "BULL DOG" Stage Switchboards:
Capitol Detroit
Allen Cleveland
Adams Detroit
Virginia Omaha
Allen Toronto
Madison Detroit
Bonstelle Theatre Detroit
State Theatre Detroit
Guild Theatre New York
James Theatre Columbus, O.
BULLDOG ELECTRIC PRODUCTS CO.
(MUTUAL ELECTRIC & MACHINE CO.)
DETROIT MICH. U.S.A.

ESTABLISHED 1884

# F. P. SMITH

## *Wire and Iron Works*

*General Offices and Shops*

FULLERTON, CLYBOURN AND
ASHLAND AVENUES
CHICAGO

THE SMITH A MIGHTY MAN IS HE
TRADE MARK

*Manufacturers of*

ORNAMENTAL
IRON and BRONZE

Iron Stairs, Elevator Enclosures, Iron Fences and Gates, Fire Escapes, Wire Screens, Brass Railings, Iron and Wire Window Guards, Bronze Tablets, Counter Railings, Iron Lamp Standards and Brackets, Etc.

*Catalog on application*

I. J. TRAMONTIN V. TRAMONTIN

TERRAZZO WORK
FILM EXCHANGE BLDG.
—by—
TRAMONTIN BROS.

*Successors to*
THE ART MARBLE, MOSAIC & TILE CO.
*Contractors*

CERAMIC FLOORS
TERRAZZO
GRANOLITHIC
MARBLE MOSAICS

PHONE RANDOLPH 0732
Office and Factory at 466-8 Columbia St., West
DETROIT, MICH.

# GEORGE W. CRAIG

*Electrical Stage Equipment*

A few of the Theatres I have equipped with Border Lights, Footlights, etc.

CAPITOL THEATRE
MADISON THEATRE
STATE THEATRE
BONSTELLE PLAYHOUSE
KEITH'S TEMPLE
CASS THEATRE
REGENT THEATRE

*Address: New Detroit Opera House Bldg.*
DETROIT

THE Citadel of the American Insurance Union, Columbus, Ohio, one of the world's tallest and most picturesque buildings, has a half million square feet of Masterbuilt concrete floors, which were selected as consistent with the high standards of design and construction that governed this important job.
THE MASTER BUILDERS COMPANY, CLEVELAND, OHIO
Masterbuilt Floors
HARDENED DUST-PROOF CONCRETE

FOX THEATRE AND OFFICE BUILDING, DETROIT

**SPENCER**
**WHITE & PRENTIS**
**FOUNDATIONS**

NEW YORK DETROIT CLEVELAND

## H. A. DAILEY CONTRACTING CO.

403 LOUDERMAN BUILDING
ST. LOUIS, MO.

Monolithic Method—Cement Floors and Concrete Work

*This work in the American Insurance Union Citadel, Columbus, Ohio, was executed*

## THE LENNOX-HALDEMAN COMPANY

DETROIT, CLEVELAND & CHICAGO

*Lathing,*
*Plastering and*
*Ornamental Plaster*

We plastered The Detroit-Leland Hotel, also the Michigan Theatre and Office Building.

We are now plastering The United Artists Building and The Fox Theatre and Office Building.

*Marble for Beauty and Permanency*

## THE NORCROSS MARBLE CO.

CLEVELAND
DETROIT

*The World's Finest Marbles*

## THE HERZOG IRON WORKS

ST. PAUL, MINN.

*Artistic Ornamental Iron*
*Bronze and Brass Work*

Examples of our work will be found on the new United Artists Theatre Building in Detroit

OLYMPIA SPORTS ARENA

DRESDEN BRICK CO.

Office and Out Door Display
831 HOLDEN, COR. OF 4th AVENUE

EMPIRE 1740
NORTHWAY 4883

*We Interpret in Terms of Marble*

The personality and individuality which the architect's drawings express and were selected to execute the beautiful marble work in the new Fox Theatre in Detroit. The marble work in the Olympia Sports Arena, Detroit is also an example of our craftsmanship and service.

F. E. Gates Marble and Tile Company
INDIANAPOLIS

FOX THEATRES

C. HOWARD CRANE AND ASSOCIATES, Architects

ARONBERG-FRIED COMPANY, Inc.

*BUILDERS*

21 EAST 40th ST. : NEW YORK

BROOKLYN NEWARK PHILADELPHIA DETROIT ST. LOUIS

## APPENDIX THREE

Architectural Books in the Collection of C. Howard Crane

The following list of architectural books suggests a partial representation of sources used by Crane for reference and possible inspiration. This list is courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, Michigan.

OLD ARCHITECTURAL BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY OF THE ARCHITECT

| | Title | Author | Date Published or of Copyright |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Architectural Graphic Stds, 2nd Ed. | Ramsey Sleeper | 11/39 |
| 1. | T-Square Club, 1901-1902 Catalog of the Annual Architectural Exhibition | | |
| 2. | Yearbook of the Architectural League of NY & Catalog of the 33rd Annual Exhibition | | 1918 |
| 3. | The Lincoln Memorial-Washington, DC | Edward Concklin | 1927 |
| 4. | Dictionary of Architecture & Bldg. A - E | Russell Sturgis | 1904 |
| 5. | Church Symbolism | F R Weber | 1927 |
| 6. | American Theatres of Today (includes some of Crane's work) | R W Sexton B F Betts | 1927 |
| 7. | Theatres | Joseph Urban | 1929 |
| 8. | Theatres & Auditoriums | Burris-Meyer & Cole | 1949 |
| 9. | Materiaux et Documents d'Architecture et de Sculpture, Vol. 2 thru 10 (complete set is 10) | | prior to 1919 |
| 10. | Encyclopedie d'Architecture (published annually) Vol. 1 thru 7 & 10, 11, 12 | V. Calliat | 1851 thru 1857, 1860,1861,1862 |
| 11. | Houses & Gardens | E. L. Lutyens | 1914 |
| 12. | English Homes, Period III, Vol. II Late Tudor & Early Stuart 1558-1649 | H. Avray Tipping | 1927 |
| 13. | English Homes, Period IV, Vol. I Late Stuart 1649-1714 | " | 1920 |
| 14. | English Homes, Period V, Vol. I Early Georgian 1714-1760 | " | 1921 |
| 15. | Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft Die Kunst Indiens | Ernst Diez | |
| 16. | Die Architektonischen Ordnungen der Griechen und Romer | L. Lohde | Berlin 1872 |
| 17. | Architectural & Ornamental Details of Ancient Rome, | | 1919 |

| | Title | Author | Date Published or of Copyright |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18. | Das Ornament der Italienischen Kunst des XV. Jahrhunderts | Herrmann Georg Nicolai | Dresden 1882 |
| 19. | Byzantine Architecture & Ornament | | 1890 |
| 20. | The Architecture, Decoration & Furniture of the Royal Palaces of Milan | | prior to 1919 |
| 21. | L'Arte Bisantina in Italia (portfolio of plates) | A. Colasanti | 1923 |
| 22. | The Architecture of Classical Antiquity & of the Renaissance - First Part The Order of Columns (Portfolio of 28 plates) | J. Buehlmann | 1892 |
| 23. | The Architecture of Classical Antiquity & of the Renaissance - Second Part Facades, Arches, Doors & Windows (Portfolio of 25 plates) | J. Buehlmann | |
| 24. | The Architecture of Classical Antiquity & of the Renaissance - Third Part Interiors & Decoration of Rooms (Portfolio of 25 plates) | J. Buehlmann | |
| 25. | Chateaux de France - Vaux-le-Vicomte (Portfolio of plates) | Hector St. Sauveur | |
| 26. | Chateaux de France - Ile de France Exterieurs et Interieurs (Portfolio of plates) | Hector St. Sauveur | |
| 27. | Chateaux de France - Anciens et Modernes - Exterieurs et Interieurs (Portfolio of plates) | Hector St. Sauveur | |
| 28. | The Book of the Boston Architectural Club for 1925 (Spanish Architecture & Details) | | |
| 29. | The Minor Architecture of Southern Spain | Whittlesey | 1917 |
| 30. | Old Architecture of Southern Mexico | Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. | 1926 |
| 31. | Mexican Architecture | Atlee B. Ayres | 1926 |

## APPENDIX FOUR

Negotiations and Planning with the Fox Film Corporation

The following minutes from meetings and letters representing the correspondence between C. Howard Crane and the Fox Film Corporation, as well as Thomas Lamb and the Fox Film Corporation in regards to Crane's work, are representative of the negotiations and planning that took place for the Fox theaters. These are from the C. Howard Crane Archives Collection, courtesy of Louis Wiltse, architect, Clarkston, Michigan.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT OFFICE OF MR. WILLIAM FOX
4 P.M. MARCH 24th and 10 A.M. MARCH 25th, 1927.

Present the 24th:
Messrs. Fox, Kempner, Crane, Kellogg and Aronberg.

Present the 25th:
Messrs. Fox, Kempner, Crane, Kellogg, Sanger and Aronberg.

NOTE:
As all items referred to in the Minutes of the two previous meetings, March 16th and March 17th, were reviewed at the meetings covered by this memo, this record, therefore, incorporates the final decision on all items in the Minutes of the two previous meetings, and the Minutes of the two previous meetings need not be referred to in carrying out the final instructions.

BROOKLYN:
Mr. Aronberg, at the request of Mr. Rogers, had discussed with S. W. Straus and Company the approval of Addenda "A" in connection with the Brooklyn budget, and pending the decision of Straus "Go Ahead" orders could not be given on the Brooklyn job.

DETROIT:
The following is the determination in connection with the Detroit job:

(a) The structure is to consist of the Theatre as drawn, except for possibly a few minor changes, and a Ten Story Office Building, the Office Building to be either Terra Cotta faced, or a combination of Face Brick and Terra Cotta as the budget may permit, and except for plate glass on the exterior and high speed elevators there is to be no special or elaborate treatment.

(b) The foundations are now installed completely and are designed to carry a 19 story building, and no change will be made in these foundations.

(c) The structural steel for a height of six stories, as now ordered and partly fabricated and practically completely detailed, is designed to carry a 19 story building, but no changes will be made in this.

(d) The balance of the steel necessary for a 10 story Office Building will, however, be designed sufficient to carry a 10 story Office Building only.

(e) The architectural design of the building will be for a 10 story building without provisions for extending to any greater height.

(f) The present plan showing the entrance to the Theatre in approximately the center of the property, entering through Woodward Avenue, thereby dividing the Office Building into two sections, is to maintain.

(g) The entrance, lobby and elevators in the north wing of the Office Building are to be omitted, and this space to be utilized for stores on the first story, and office space on the other stories, and the necessary structural, architectural, and mechanical changes are to be made to accomplish this, as the final determination to make the building a fixed height of 10 stories without providing for increasing its height, establishes the permanent conclusion that this wing is not to have, at any time in the future, an entrance, lobby or elevators.

(h) The south escalator is permanently omitted and the space utilized for other purposes as no provision is to be made for future installation. This omission permits of a better layout for the elevators, lobby and entrance to the Office Building through the south wing, and the elevator installation is to be high speed and to take care of the requirements of both wings of the ten story building.

(i) The crossover passage connecting the north and south wings of the Office Building is to occur over the Theatre entrance vestibule at the east end, and this passage will consist of a corridor with a set of offices on both the east and west sides extending across the front of the building over the east end of the grand foyer, and this occurs on each floor up to and including the sixth.

(j) On account of the shortening of the grand foyer, brought about by the crossover passage, it is advisable from an architectural standpoint to decrease the height of the grand foyer; so it is to be decreased in height a sufficient distance, (approximately 8 or 10 feet) to permit of the 6th floor office building layout being the same as the 7th or typical floor, which adds about 4,000 feet net rentable area. In this connection, the roof girders over the grand foyer are to be designed to carry only the additional four stories of the ten story office building.

ST. LOUIS:

| | |
|---|---|
| Original cube of St. Louis | 5,664,000 cu. ft. |
| Detroit | 5,043,000 cu. ft. |
| Overage, St. Louis greater than Detroit | 621,000 cu.ft |

This was on account of the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) St. Louis stage deeper than Detroit | 5 ft. |
| (b) Additional depth St. Louis back of Auditorium | 20 ft. |
| (c) Additional length of St.Louis foyer | 23 ft. |
| TOTAL | 48 ft. |

It was determined to take the Detroit plan, which was 48 feet less over all, and place it on the St. Louis lot which would, therefore, leave a plot 48 feet at the back end of the property, which was to be left open through to Washington.

Mr. Crane and Mr. Kempner were to determine, by the plot survey, whether to make this 48 feet or 50 feet.

## BUDGETS

The following Estimates of Cost were submitted by the Contractor, including Building Cost and Contractor's Fee, but not including Architect's Fee, Furnishings, Carrying Charges, etc.

Brooklyn:

| | |
|---|---|
| First Budget, February 1927 | $2,769,240.42 |
| Revised Budget, March 1927 | 2,281,351,78 |

This change in price was brought about through Addenda "A" which everyone considered, including Mr. Milner of Mr. Thomas W. Lamb's office, established the extent of the savings which could be made on this job.

This amount was approved by Mr. Fox subject to the approval by Straus of Addenda "A", which Mr. Aronberg reported was being reviewed by Straus, and he would have a decision in a few days. At this writing a conference has been scheduled for Monday morning, March 28th.

Detroit:

Kempner submitted the following allowances for Contractor, included in the Halsey, Stuart loan.

Detroit:(Cont'd)

| | |
|---|---|
| Theatre | $2,720,000.00 |
| Office Building | 820,000.00 |
| One Story Commercial | 54,000.00 |
| Elaborations | 100,000.00 |
| Contingent | 100,000.00 |
| TOTAL | $3,794,000.00 |

The Contractor's estimate for this work, based on the Plans and Specifications was $3,610,000.00, but Mr. Fox's instructions were to practice the same economies on this job as on the Brooklyn job, through Addenda "A", and authorized the expenditure of $3,366,000.00 which would have left a surplus in the loan of $428,000.00, and it was considered advisable, at a previous meeting, to reduce the loan $500,000.00.

Mr. Crane then suggested that, inasmuch as the construction of a six story building in front of the theatre would expose the unsightly roof of the theatre, it would be best to build a ten story office building.

The Contractor submitted as an Estimate of Cost for the Theatre and 10 story building, the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Fox's allowance for Theatre and six story office building | $3,366,000.00 |
| Additional for the four stories, approximately | 435,240.00 |
| TOTAL | $3,801,240.00 |

It was, therefore, determined to proceed with the theatre and ten story building at the allowance in the loan of $3,794,000.00, which as originally set up, was to take care of a theatre and six story building, but which, under the contemplated revisions, was to take care of a theatre and ten story building, and on this premise the the loan was not to be changed.

St. Louis:

Mr. Kempner submitted the following building cost allowance in the Halsey, Stuart loan:

| | |
|---|---|
| Theatre | $2,867,000.00 |
| Commercial | 280,000.00 |
| Contingent | 100,000.00 |
| TOTAL | $3,267,000.00 |

Based on changes in this memorandum, together with Mr. Fox's instructions to restudy the job as was done by Addenda "A" for Brooklyn, and based on decreasing the cube of St. Louis by reason of duplicating the Detroit job, Mr. Fox authorized the following expenditure:

St. Louis: (Cont'd)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theatre | $2,521,500.00 | |
| Commercial and Contingent | 380,000.00 | |
| Total | | $2,901,500.00 |
| Total of loan | | 3,267,000.00 |
| Overage in loan | | $365,500.00 |

At a previous meeting it was considered advisable to decrease the loan by the overages shown in this memorandum, as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Detroit | $428,000.00 | |
| St.Louis | 365,500.00 | |
| Total | | $793,500.00 ($750,000.00) |

but Detroit, as explained hereinbefore, is not to be reduced, and as regards the St. Louis job, as the requirements in connection with the commercial building are not yet determined, Mr. Fox is going to withhold his decision on this for a short time.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRACTOR TO PROCEED

Summarizing, the Contractor's allowances are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Brooklyn | $2,418,232,89 |
| Detroit | 3,794,000.00 |
| St.Louis | 2,901,500.00 |

On Brooklyn, the Contractor is not to proceed until Straus' approval of Addenda "A".

On Detroit and St. Louis, the Architect must make extensive alterations in the Plans and Specifications, and pending completion of this information the Contractor is to work in close co-operation with the Architect, and award such contracts, and at such times, as may be considered to best serve the interests of the Owner, and in such amounts as to keep within the budget allowances.

It was considered by Mr. Fox, the Architect, and the Contractor, that the budget allowances had been cut to the lowest possible point, but by careful study and close co-operation and careful buying at the proper time, that the cost could be kept within these allowances.

TIME FOR COMPLETION

The following dates for completion were established by Mr. Fox:

Brooklyn:

| | |
|---|---|
| Theatre | Dec. 24, 1927 |
| Office Building | Dec. 24, 1927. |

Detroit:

| | |
|---|---|
| Theatre | July 1, 1928 |
| Office Building | Apr. 1, 1928 |

St. Louis:

| | |
|---|---|
| Theatre | July 1, 1928 |
| Office Building | Apr. 1, 1928 |

GENERAL NOTES

Mr. Fox asked that Messrs. Crane, Kempner and Aronberg visit the Roxy and study its various special features, particularly the following:

1. Seats, as to size and spacing.
2. Cyclorama and trough lighting of same.
3. Usher signal system.
4. Stage projection booth.
5. Emergency room.
6. Back stage construction.

The final decision on seat size and spacing was as follows:

Brooklyn:

As detailed, except that Auditorium is to be changed to 2' 10" aisles and the Mezzanine changed to 3' 4" aisles.

Detroit and St. Louis:

Same as the Roxy, namely:

| | |
|---|---|
| Orchestra | 2' 10" aisles |
| Mezzanine | 3' 4" aisles |
| Balcony | 2' 10" aisles |

The seat sizes for all Fox theatres are to be 20" and

21" except for the Mezzanine which are to be 22", and it is realized that this will reduce the seating capacity of the various houses from that now detailed.

The question of the stepping of the floors and the slope at each end seat at aisles, which was raised by Mr. Mlinar of Lamb's office, was left entirely to the decision of Mr. Crane.

The Brooklyn, Detroit, St. Louis and Newark houses are to have stage elevators the same as the Roxy.

The Detroit, St. Louis and Newark houses are to have auxiliary organs in the grand foyer.

The ticket office arrangement of the St. Louis and Detroit houses, as now drawn, was approved and the Brooklyn house is to have an auxiliary booth in one side wall of the entrance vestibule.

It was definitely determined to omit the auditorium side loge seats, but the aisle spacing was left entirely to Mr. Crane's judgment.

Crane's offices are reminded to put the public urinals in separate rooms, as it is contemplated to use colored lavatories in the washrooms and these would clash with the white urinals if they were in the same room.

The Contractor was cautioned to get a very special guarantee from Otis Elevator in connection with the soundproofing of the escalator installation.

Wherever possible, on all Fox theatres, provide an access pipe space in back of lavatories, urinals and closets.

The office building doors, at Mr. Kempner's request, are to be one glass panel.

Mr. Mlinar of Lamb's office did not submit, on March 24th as promised, his Addenda for the Detroit and St. Louis jobs showing the possibility of savings.

Mr. Crane is to submit to Mr. Kempner, as quickly as possible, revised renting plans for the Detroit job.

There are to be no brass pipe rails in the Fox theatres, requiring polishing, and where there are to be exposed bronze rails they should be dull, natural finish, requiring no upkeep.

These notes, where applicable, are to apply to all the Fox theatres.

Architects-Fried Company, Inc.
BUILDERS
New York

Bldg. Appraisal

C. HOWARD CRANE
Architect
ELMER GEORGE KOEHLER
Associate
BEN A. DORE
Detroit

D. B. Kellogg

345 Madison Avenue
New YorkCity

April 6th, 1927.

Halsey, Stuart & Company, Inc.,
14 Wall Street,
New York-City.

CRANE'S FINAL APPRAISAL

DETROIT, MICH.

Gentlemen:

At your request, the following is my appraisal of the so-called Fox Building, in Detroit, Michigan, consisting of a Theatre, Ten Story Office Building and a One Story Building to be erected for the Colwood Company in the City of Detroit, Michigan, as shown by the Architectural, Structural, Mechanical and Electrical Drawings and Specifications prepared in the office of the undersigned.

The land upon which it is proposed to erect the building, as indicated on the survey attached to the drawings, fronts 320 feet 8 inches on the North side of Columbia Street, 32 feet 4 inches on the West side of Woodward Avenue and 314 feet 11-3/4 inches on the South side of Montcalm Street, Detroit, Michigan.

Our estimate of the value of the Ten Story Office Building, the 5,000 seat Theatre, and the One Story Store Building on Columbia Street, when completed in accordance with the Drawings and Specifications prepared by the undersigned, and including the Mechanical and Special Building equipment, is Six Million, Nine Hundred Twenty-Two Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars, - $6,922,500.00.

We estimate the value of the furnishings, such as seats, carpets, rugs, draperies, curtains, furniture, stage scenery and equipment, special organ, etc., at about Four Hundred and Fifty-Thousand Dollars, - $450,000.00. TOTAL $7,372,500.00.

Very truly yours,
C. HOWARD CRANE

By (Signed) C. Howard Crane

COPY

AHONBERG-FRIED COMPANY, INC.
BUILDERS
[illegible]
NEW YORK

Bldg. Appraisal

C. HOWARD CRANE
Architect
ELMER GEORGE KIEHLER
Associate
BEN A. DORE
Detroit

D. B. Kellogg

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We estimate the value of the furnishings, such as seats, carpets, rugs, draperies, curtains, furniture, stage scenery and equipment, special organ, etc., at about Four Hundred and Fifty-Thousand Dollars, - $4[illegible],[illegible]00.00. TOTAL $7,372,500.00.

Very truly yours,
C. HOWARD CRANE

By (Signed) C. Howard Crane

COPY

FOX THEATRE AND OFFICE BUILDING, DETROIT, MICH.
HOLLYWOOD COMPANY, OWNERS - C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECT

CRANE SEGREGATION OF
APPRAISAL OF APRIL 6, 1927.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Plant - Liability & Compensation Insurance - Job Administration | | $170,100.00 |
| Wrecking, Excavation & Foundations | | 208,000.00 |
| Concrete & Fireproofing | | 465,000.00 |
| Masonry | | 481,000.00 |
| Carpentry & Millwork & Hardware | | 105,455.00 |
| Structural Steel | | 405,000.00 |
| Granite & Terra Cotta | | 206,000.00 |
| Miscellaneous & Ornamental Iron & Bronze | | 374,000.00 |
| Metal Windows | | 45,600.00 |
| Hollow Metal, Tin Clad & Kalamein | | 47,049,00 |
| Furring, Lathing, Plastering, Scagliola and Art Marble | | 645,000.00 |
| Roofing, Sheet Metal & Waterproofing | | 33,012.00 |
| Marble, Slate, Tile & Terrazzo | | 240,000.00 |
| Glass, Glazing & Structural Glass | | 136,000.00 |
| Elevator,s Escalatore & Orchestra Lift | | 379,000.00 |
| Heating, Ventilating & Refrigeration, Etc. | | 558,750.00 |
| Plumbing, Vacuum, Etc. | | 190,000.00 |
| Electrical Work | | 329,500.00 |
| Painting & Acoustical Work | | 48,995,32 |
| | Total | $5,067,461.32 |
| Contractor's Fee - 6% | | 304,047.65 |
| | Total | $5,371,509.00 |
| Architect's Fee - 6% | | 322,291.00 |
| | Total | $5,693,800.00 |
| Carrying Charges | | 1,228,700.00 |
| | Total | $6,922,500.00 |
| Furnishings | | 450,000.00 |
| | Total | $7,372,500.00 |
| Land | | 3,750,000.00 |
| | Grand Total | $11,122,500.00 |

2.

Halsey, Stuart & Company, Inc. April 6th, 1927.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **THEATRE:** | | |
| 5,043,000 cu. ft. @ .53 | $2,677,790. | |
| Architect's Fee 6% | 160,367.40 ✓ | |
| Furnishings | 350,000.00 ✓ | |
| | TOTAL | $3,187,157.40 |
| **OFFICE BUILDING:** (10 Story) | | |
| 2,113,000 cu. ft. @ .60 | 1,267,800.00 | |
| Architect's Fee, 6% | 76,068.00 ✓ | 1,343,868.00 |
| **OPEN TERRY BUILDING:** | | |
| (Including Architect's Fee, | | — 6 ✓ 57,500.00 |
| Additional Cost for Foundations, | | 100,000.00 |
| TOTAL COST OF BUILDING: | | $4,834,525.40 |

The allowance of $350,000.00 for furnishings for the theatre [illegible] architects as seats, carpets, rugs, [illegible], curtains, furniture, stage scenery and equipment, special [illegible] etc.

Very truly yours,

C. Howard Crane

4 684 525 40
Carry 750
5 434 525 40
[illegible] 150
[illegible] 9,1[illegible],525,40.

# COPY

FROM THE OFFICE OF C. HOWARD CRANE, KENNETH FRANZHEIM, ARCHITECTS

April 6th, 1927

Haley, Stuart & Company, Inc.,
14 Wall Street,
New York City,

CRANE FINAL ESTIMATE

St. Louis, Mo.

Gentlemen:

At your request, the following is my estimate of cost of the so-called, Fox Building, in St. Louis, Mo., consisting of a Theatre, Two Story Extension, Two Story Taxpayer, One Story Taxpayer and One Story Restaurant to be erected for the Theatre Realty Company in the City of St. Louis, Missouri, as shown by the Architectural, Structural, Mechanical and Electrical drawings and specifications prepared in the office of the undersigned.

I have also made an examination of the present Sir Henry Furbaldt Building adjoining the above mentioned proposed buildings.

Based upon these drawings and prices of materials and labor prevailing in St. Louis, Mo., as of April 1927, including Architect and Contractor's Fees, and not including general overhead costs consisting of organization and legal expenses, interest during construction, taxes and insurance during construction and installation, we are of the opinion that the present day cost of erecting a Theatre, Two Story Extension, Two Story Taxpayer, One Story Taxpayer, and One Story Restaurant, including Mechanical and special building equipment, in accordance with our drawings and specifications, will amount to $5,480,512.20 exclusive of the cost of financing, itemized as follows:

THEATRE:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1,043,000 cu. ft. @ .74 | $772,220. | |
| Architect's Fee @ | 165,795.20 | |
| Furnishings, | 350,000. | |
| | | $5,236,615.20 |

OTHER BUILDINGS:

| | |
|---|---|
| (Including Architect's Fee, | 243,897.00 |
| TOTAL, | $5,480,512.20 |

COPY

2.

FROM THE OFFICE OF C. HOWARD CRANE, KENNETH FRANZHEIM, ARCHITECTS

April 6th, 1927.

Maloney, Stuart & Company, Inc.

The Theatre is to be furnished complete with such items as seats, carpets, rugs, draperies, curtains, furniture, stage scenery and equipment, special organ etc., at a cost of $350,000.00

Very truly yours,

C. HOWARD CRANE

By C. Howard Crane

DETROIT NO. [illegible].

May 9th, 1927.

Colwood Company,
850 Tenth Avenue,
New York City.

LAMB FINAL

Gentlemen:

We have studied the plans and specifications of your Architect, C. Howard Crane, for the 5,000 seat theatre, ten story and basement office building, and one story and basement to be erected by you in Detroit, Michigan, on Woodward Avenue, and Mountcalm Street, and estimate the costs as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theatre | 5,049,642 cu.ft. @ .55 | $2,777,303.10 | |
| Office Bldg. | 2,078,520 cu.ft. @ .65 | 1,349,738.10 | |
| (including tenant layouts) | | | |
| Cost including Contractor's Fee | | 4,127,041.20 | |
| Architect's Fee 6% | | 247,[illegible] | |
| | | $4,374,[illegible].67 | |
| Furnishings | | 350,000.00 | |
| Total Building Cost | | | $4,724,683.67 |
| Interest during construction, Taxes, Ground Rent, Contingencies | 16% | | 750,000.00 |
| TOTAL | | | $5,474,683.67 |

RECAPITULATION.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Land | $3,750,000.00 | |
| Building | 5,474,683.67 | |
| Total | | $9,224,683.67 |
| Loan | | 6,[illegible],000.00, equals 80+% |

Respectfully submitted,

Thos. W. Lamb

TEL:KK

## APPENDIX FIVE

A Photographic Listing of Crane's Existing Theaters in Detroit

The following list consists of the last remaining theaters designed by C. Howard Crane and Associates and their current usages in the city of Detroit. This information is based upon the findings of a survey of the city carried out by the writer. Information of their locations, name changes, dates of completion, and sizes was taken from Andrew Craig Morrison's *Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace: An Illustrated Inventory of Theater Buildings in the Detroit Area* (1974). Information on their historic designations were obtained from the Historic Designation Advisory Board of the Detroit City Council and the Michigan Bureau of History, Lansing, Michigan. The current conditions of the theaters have been evaluated as "good," if the theater has been restored and the majority of its original fabric is intact; " fair," if the theater has been adaptively re-used or is planned for future rehabilitation and some of the original fabric was or will be retained; "poor," if the theater is abandoned and deteriorating with little or none of the original fabric remaining.

Name: Addison Theatre.

Later Name: The Fine Arts Theatre, changed in 1915.

Address: 2954 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1914

Size: 582 seats.

Current Use: Abandoned.

Current Condition: Poor.

Historic Designation: None

Name: Bonstelle Playhouse. Originally the Temple Beth El.

Later Name: Wayne State University Theatre, changed in 1951.

Address: 3424 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1906 by Albert Kahn. Remodeled by Crane, 1925.

Size: 1200 seats.

Current Use: Owned and occupied by the Wayne State Univ. Theatre.

Current Condition: Good.

Historic Designation: On the National Register of Historic Places.

Name: Orchestra Hall.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 3740 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1919.

Size: 2286 seats.

Current Use: Home of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Current Condition: Good.

Historic Designation: On the Local, State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Name: Garden Theatre.

Later Name: The Sassy Cat.

Address: 3929 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1912.

Size: 903 seats.

Current Use: Pornographic theater.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: None.

Name: The Majestic Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 4136 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1915.

Size: 1651 seats.

Current Use: Dance Club.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: None.

Name: The Fox Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 2211 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1927.

Size: 5041 seats.

Current Use: Entertainment center

Current Condition: Good.

Historic Designation: On the National Register of Historic Places.

Name: The State Theatre.

Later Name. Unchanged.

Address: 2111 Woodward Avenue.

Date Completed: 1925.

Size: 2967 seats.

Current Use: Dance Club, rock bands.

Current Condition: Good.

Historic Designation: On the National Register of Historic Places.

Name: Adams Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 44 West Adams Street.

Date Completed: 1917.

Size: 1770 seats.

Current Use: Owned, but no current plans for restoration or development.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: Included in the Grand Circus Park Historic District, National Register of Historic Places.

Name: Capitol Theatre.

Later Name: The Grand Circus Theatre, changed in 1960.

Address: 1526 Broadway.

Date Completed: 1922.

Size: 3367 seats.

Current Use: Undergoing restoration. Future home of the Michigan Opera Theatre

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: Included in the Grand Circus Park Historic District, National Register of Historic Places.

Name: The Madison Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 22 Witheral Street.

Date Completed: 1917.

Size: 1806 seats.

Current Use: Owned by the Michigan Opera Theatre. Future plans for development.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: Included in the Grand Circus Park Historic District, National Register of Historic Places.

Name: The United Artists Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 140 Bagley Avenue.

Date Completed: 1928.

Size: 2070 seats.

Current Use: Development plans for a restaurant, retail space, lofts. Owned by David Grossman.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: Included in the Grand Circus Park Historic District, National Register of Historic Places.

Name: Globe Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 3520 Grand River Avenue.

Date Completed: 1912 by Harley & Atcheson, architects. Enlarged and altered by Crane, 1915.

Size: 650 seats in 1912; 853 after Crane's alterations.

Current Use: Abandoned.

Current Condition: Poor.

Historic Designation: None.

Name: The Chopin Theatre.

Later Name: Unchanged.

Address: 7320 Michigan Avenue.

Date Completed: 1922.

Size: 400 seats.

Current Use: Fabric store.

Current Condition: Fair.

Historic Designation: None.

Name: The Harmony Theatre.

Later Name: Changed to the Admiral in 1941.

Address: 11205 Mack Avenue.

Date Completed: 1921, architect unknown. Altered by Crane and Associates 1941.

Size: 1322 seats.

Current Use: Abandoned.

Current Condition: Poor.

Historic Designation: None.

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Anne & Jerome Fisher

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